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OCCASIONAL AND
IMMEMORIAL DAYS

BY THE VERY REVEREND
✓ A. K. H. BOYD, D.D. (EDIN.), LL.D. (ST. AND.)
FIRST MINISTER OF ST ANDREWS
AUTHOR OF 'TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF ST ANDREWS'
'THE RECREATIONS OF A COUNTRY PARSON' ETC.

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TO

M. B. B.

WHO PASSED FROM THIS LIFE MARCH 14, 1895

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

CONTENTS



	PAGE
I. THE MOTHER OF US ALL	3
II. THIS MINISTRY	21
III. THE DEDICATION	37
IV. THE INEVITABLE CHOICE	53
V. TRIED BY PROVOCATION	73
VI. MODEST EXPECTATION AT WHITSUNTIDE	91
VII. CONSUMMATION	105
VIII. KNOWN IN ADVERSITIES	127
IX. THE CONDITION ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD	145
X. SATISFIED	163
XI. LESSONS OF AUTUMN	181
XII. QUIET	201
XIII. FAITH AND SIGHT	225
XIV. ON THE MOUNT OF COMMUNION	247
XV. CHURCH LIFE IN SCOTLAND— RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT	263
XVI. WHAT WE LIVE FOR	305

I

THE MOTHER OF US ALL

B

I

*THE MOTHER OF US ALL*¹

‘But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the Mother
of us all.’—GAL. iv. 26.

MY BROTHERS OF THE MANSE,

I feel quite sure that it began to press itself upon us when we were little boys, not taking it in that we should ever grow old, listening to our Fathers’ prayers in church Sunday by Sunday,—How singularly that imagery from the far East has caught on and naturalised itself here in what was once the far West : how homely it has grown : how perfectly understandable : how charged with a pathos in which there live the Sundays and services of our childhood : all that was dear about them : and all that was wearisome or unworthy eliminated and utterly forgot. Thomas a Kempis,

¹ Preached in Glasgow Cathedral on Thursday, March 27, 1890, before the Society of the Sons of the Clergy, on the occasion of its centenary.

saintly soul, says that looking back over his life, he could not remember that he had ever done any good at all. You and I, my brothers, cannot remember that our Fathers ever did anything but what was good. Mine went just this self-same day five-and-twenty years. I have no doubt at all that where they are, they are far better and kinder than they were here : though that can hardly be. But we should be too thankful to have them back, only for a little, to hear the sorrowful story of how it is faring with their sons,—to have them back just as they were, and in the likeness that we knew.

I knew some of your Fathers too : I wish they had seen you what you are to-day. It would have gladdened the dear heart.

But I was speaking of that old familiar imagery. When we make mention of *Jerusalem*, no comment is needful to our Scots ears. When we *pray for the peace of Jerusalem*, who among us, that ate the bread of the Kirk through those years, needs to be told what is in all hearts? When we say *Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Sion*, we think of fragrant Sunday mornings in Summer when all the parish, undivided, Nonconformity pretty well unknown, and rich and poor meeting together yet,

lifted up a voice of praise that was wonderfully hearty if likewise homely, in the homely parish-church of Kyle. Ah, make every church as majestic as this : and still the grand thing about the church will be the living congregation ! Looking back, my brothers, it is always the golden Summer-time. She stands out, hallowed with the memories of our own golden age : delightful with all sweet scents and sounds of the breathing country-side : Mother-like and all-comforting to Her travelled sons, now somewhat sophisticated : beautified with a simple sanctity that was well content with a homely worship forasmuch as it never had seen anything other : that Jerusalem which is underneath the skies : which is free as never other National Church was,—no, nor Christian communion not National :—and which is the Mother of us all.

I used, when a lad at College (as did some of you) regularly to come and hear the sermon before the Sons of the Clergy. We put the Function so in those days. That is forty years since. The sermons were always (almost always) extremely good : just the best one ever heard : I could give a minute account of each of them to-day. But the rationale was too plain. The good men gave

us the most striking sermon they had lately written: It was at such a service I listened to the most striking sermon I ever heard in my life; but, save a little bit tacked on at the end, there did not use to be the faintest reference to the occasion. We have changed many things, in the main surely for the better: some decent conventionalities are done with; and now, at least, from first word to last (and the words shall not be many), we are to think of what is uppermost and warmest in our hearts, looking back from this centenary on these hundred years. Let the old remembrances of the old time come over us to-day; so shall we be kinder and truer men:—the Manse where we were born, amid its old evergreens and its blossoming trees: the Church where our Fathers conducted God's worship,—the homely place amid the green graves; the Father and Mother who have left us, leaving in us unworthy all they most cared for in all this universe: the brothers and sisters that grew up, over the land, amid the like kindly surroundings, and that understand each others' ways so well: surely, Brothers of the Manse, rich and poor, successful men and beaten men, you who must practise to the end the thoughtful economy amid which we were all

reared, and you who have grown out-standing men and wealthy men,—looking back to the time, ages since, when each of us was the minister's little boy,—it is truth we said in our prayer to God Almighty, that all of us are brethren through strong and tender ties: claiming kindred to-day under that grand roof and allowing it from our very heart: and minded, if God help us, that the righteous shall not be seen forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

We wish, all of us, to be humble: and most of us have met takings-down enough to make us and keep us so. But we shall put on no sham-humility, thinking of the Church of our Fathers. We are proud of our birth. It ought to have made us worthier and better men. We are proud, with no unworthy pride, of what our sainted Fathers were, and of what our Brothers have grown to be. You know how many of our most eminent preachers and theologians have been Sons of the Manse: Look over the list of this Society, and thank God. High on the judgment-seat, as high as may be: Foremost at the bar,—why it has grown proverbial where the Law finds her heads, whatever the Government in power; Second to none in the Senate, for eloquence or statesmanship: and in

more stirring walks of life than you might have thought of for the quiet minister's son, amid wild African perils where half what was done had earned the Cross for Valour in another vocation not more heroic : still our Brethren are there, and the kindly remembrance of the Manse opens the heart to you. Quiet stay-at-home folk as most of us are, we do not forget Archibald Forbes, any more than our own Presidents, John Campbell and John Inglis ; and if Goldsmith reaches all hearts when describing the Village preacher in lines to last with the language he paints his Father, not a whit less touching is it when figures familiar round the Manse-door live for evermore on the canvas touched by the pathetic genius of David Wilkie.

Pathetic, I said. Yes, and humorous too. Evermore they go together.

But I pass from this, my honoured friends. We know it never was difficult work to praise Athens, speaking to the Athenians. Just a sentence more on this line. If you go a generation down : if, leaving the Sons, you go on to the Grandsons ; where shall we end our count ? They did not love each other : but let just two be named together : Brougham, and Macaulay.

It is not often that a parliamentary blue-book

contains even one sentence which stirs anybody very much. But when men brought up as we were brought up think of all the words mean, in the respect of poorly-paid toil, of long self-denial, of wearing anxiety, of 'plain living and high thinking,' I will confess that it is ever through a certain mist that I read them, 'No institution has ever existed which, at so little cost, has accomplished so much good.' It is in that fashion that a Committee of the Commons reported concerning (let us take the words of the most eloquent Anglican who ever spoke up for the Kirk) 'That institution which alone bears on its front, without note or comment, the title of *The Church of Scotland*.' And it was not an ordinary Committee which said *that* in the face of the British Parliament: Two of its members were the great Sir Robert Peel, not yet forgot, and the grand old representative of Oxford University, Sir Robert Inglis. Yes, we don't cost much: not though you reckoned all our old endowments as coming (and they do NOT come) from the pocket of the tax-payer. Not so much more than the income with which Henry the Eighth enriched some like-natured soul, the king liberally giving away what was not his to give, and the like-natured soul making no

return of service whatsoever. Ay, a poor Church : without prizes, without sinecures : all whose pay has to be earned by hard work. Things are mended, somewhat : since the stupid old parliament-man (I really can't say statesman) declared that the Kirk should be kept down ; that 'a pair Kirk would be a pure Kirk.' We don't want to be paid for doing nothing ; or even for looking dignified : but to get a good article you must pay a fair price. It galled one, I confess, to hear that old clap-trap for an underpaid clergy repeated by men whose pay was something more than ample in proportion to their abilities : men whom we beat at College and did not think very much of it : but who, God knows why (by which I mean nobody else knows), were by and by elevated as you never can be. The work of the Church has never been worthily recompensed : if the minister have no more than the income provided by the Church (and few have more), it means a life of anxious struggle, and wife and children left all but destitute if the minister is early taken before the children can fend for themselves. Every one knows how 'merciless robbers of Christ's heritage,' as downright John Knox called them, plundered the Church at the Reformation. And now, the

benefices are worth just one-third of what they were two hundred years since: so has the value of money changed. There are vulgar persons, too, mainly among the rich, who estimate a class of men according to their worldly means. 'I like Mr. Such-a-one,'—'*he is so humble.*' I once heard that said of a minister by a person of position: One knew exactly what it meant. It was a laird, of long descent, who said to one who was a minister and a minister's son, as though pleasantly expressing the normal relation, 'Of course the lairds always laughed at the ministers.' Did they? They had best stand by the Kirk, or they are like to laugh in unhilarious fashion. Should the Kirk ever be disendowed, surely as fate the next question will be the disendowment of certain others, who for three centuries have grabbed the nation's money, and done no work for it at all.

These things which I have no more than hinted at are, to every person who is decently informed, rather more certain than that two and two make four. But I pass from them: they irritate: though they ought to be repeated, persistently, in certain ears to-day. Some folk talk lightly of Disestablishment; not thinking what a flood-gate *that* would open.

I want to think, my Brothers, of the work of our Society.

Of course, if the nation desired the clergy to frankly accept the peasants' position, even our Endowment Scheme livings, unsupplemented, might do. But you know what is expected, ay demanded, of the clergy, by the poorest parishioner. The Kirk will not long abide, if the clergy fall into contempt. How about recruits? You remember the shrewd American's saying: 'Make your livings fifty dollars, and you will still have plenty of ministers: but they will be fifty dollar men.' You must have books, or at least read them: you must keep up with the thinking of the age: or your sermons will be like a ten-years-old Almanac. And you know what an example the clergy must set in the matter of giving. I could tell you strange things. Did not Thirty-thousand pounds go to the starting of the Endowment Scheme from our Manses? So with the Small-Livings Scheme. And others beyond number. If any man have a living a little better than usual, some know how it is brought down to the average, and lower, by never-ending calls. Then Protestantism has said, and for good reasons, *Not a celibate clergy*. I don't argue that out.

Only I say, If ministers are good for much themselves ;—If ministers can reach the hearts of others in their teaching ;—it comes mainly of the children. I know, I know, how balanced the thing is : how the black sheep may break father's and mother's heart, and bring the *Better never been born* : But in normal cases, and in healthy moods, it is as I say. Only there must be many anxious thoughts. Not merely to look at the rosy little faces in the winter fire-light, and to think what it would be to lose them : but to think what it would be for them to lose *you*. 'It would make a great difference at home,' a country minister said in my hearing in a little gathering of his fellows : and silence fell upon that company for a space. I think of the care-worn father sitting solitary when the house has sunk to sleep : and, as he feels the energies of life failing within him, brain and hand turning weary, thinking that too much depends upon his life : thinking, as Luther tells us he often thought, what would become of his wife and his little children, when he was far away. There have been anxious years in the family-history of most of us, my Brothers, through which everything depended on a Father's life : the entire career of the boys in this world. I know the Manse, and the quiet busy

careful life there : I know the big trees where our names may be read yet, an ancient scar in the bark : I know the bright little heads with the curly hair : I see the little people, boys and girls, racing about, and I hear their merriment (God bless them) : but I have been an anxious young country minister myself, and I am thankful to have been allowed to grow old. Ah, it was the warm nest upon the unreliable, decaying bough ! Any day, the Manse the Home no more.

We know, some of us, what it was to come out from the Manse, not pushed out by death, and with comfort and hope in prospect. Even then it was strange to look round the stript rooms, that looked so piteously at us. But when the Father has been carried forth over that threshold, and lies, close to the home he loved, under the turf beneath the church's shade ; when the poor widow must face, heart-broken, sordid and frowsy realities of poverty if not of absolute want hitherto unknown, and terrible lonely perplexities that bewilder the aching head : then, my Brothers, I have known the stringently-measured aid our Society could give, just keep that little household from going under water : I have seen it welcomed with a gush of thankfulness which it made one's heart sore to see. And when

the pinch of those terrible years was long over : when the worn mother was long re-united to our brother who had gone before : I have heard one who had done as honourable work in this life as any of you, testify that his whole start and progress he owed to the Glasgow Sons of the Clergy.

They were not sentimentalists, but men of strong common-sense, and who put their aims with a quiet self-restrained earnestness infinitely impressive,—those three or four sons of ministers who, in the far-different Glasgow of that day, thought of such a Society. The purpose was simple : was comprehensive. It was, ‘being aiding to the children of deceased ministers who are in distress.’ ‘The design appeared very laudable ; and, *in such a place as Glasgow*, not impracticable.’ Whereupon they called a meeting of a few more Sons, a dozen in all ; over which good Dr. Thomas Reid presided, whom we knew of old in the Moral Philosophy Class, and whose name has travelled far. So the Society entered, this time a hundred years, upon its career of quiet and (God be thanked) ever-growing helpfulness. From the first, they resolved to have ‘an annual day of thanksgiving to Almighty God, on which there should be an extraordinary meeting of the Society,

to attend Divine service.' That decorous function has never failed. We meet to-day for the hundred-and-first time, without a break; a long space in this changing world. And always this last Thursday of March. It is recorded that one who was specially consulted as to the formation of the Society was my predecessor as Minister of St. Andrews, Dr. George Hill: only two incumbencies between him and me. And in that year, 1790, he was Moderator of the General Assembly. Nor should it be forgotten, to-day, how it was provided, a century gone, that 'the members should walk to church in procession *after the magistrates*, who have agreed to honour the Society with their presence.' We are proud to render honour to whom honour is due. We are proud that in each of these hundred years (as again to-day) the Society has had not merely the official countenance, but the true sympathy, of those who rule in the vast city which has grown up under the shadow of this beautiful and stately church of St. Kentigern.

Two things there are, which have ever seemed to me to partake of the nature of surplusage. One is, when some worthy man whom we should never think of naming as representative of the zeal or

intelligence of the Kirk, of a sudden arises to thank you and me for doing honour to the name of the Church of Scotland. The other is, my dear and honoured Brothers of the Manse, to plead with you on behalf of the Society of the Sons of the Clergy. We only wish, every man of us, that we could give to this Centenary Fund ten-fold, a hundred-fold, what could be afforded from our lean purse, in these tragic days which have fallen so heavy on most of us. Wherefore, no more. I could not speak, when my Father preached before this Society: I was not five months old, on the departed day. But I never valued more anything that has come to me, than this being permitted to lift up my poor voice for my helpless brothers and sisters of the Church he so loved, on this anniversary of the day he died.

II

THIS MINISTRY

II

*THIS MINISTRY*¹

‘This Ministry.’—2 COR. iv. 1.

IF I were allowed to preach many times to my Fathers and Brethren, I should have enough to say: and it would be pleasant to pour out one’s heart to their sure sympathy. But when it is for only once in a life-time: never thus before, and never to be thus again: one is perplexed.

I know there are laymen here: and often, I am told, not many ministers. I confess I never but once was present on such an occasion: and then I was a boy, watching intently the first General Assembly I ever saw. I remember the text that day: and I have a vivid impression of the sermon. Yet here is my subject: though it may not suit us

¹ Preached in St. Giles’ Cathedral, Edinburgh, on Thursday, May 21, 1891, at the opening of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

all. It has come : as subjects come, and will not be put off.

This Ministry has its special characteristics ; as this National Church has : marking off from all beside : *differentiating*, to take the phrase of the day. The Church of Scotland is very unlike the Church of England : this in divers ways. For one note, the men here are generally better than the churches : the churches there are not unfrequently better than the men. No doubt, our churches are usually so unworthy, that it is easy to be better : and theirs so beautiful, that it is hard to be so. But the entire mode of parochial working is very different : different as are the services, the preaching, the environment, and the men's antecedents. *When I was Master of Rugby*, it sounded quite natural to hear an Anglican clergyman say. To him who thus modestly put his great Head-Mastership, it was said, *You were a Double-First?* *Yes*, was the quiet answer ; and then he passed to a kind word of us here. And This Ministry has greatly changed, in my remembrance. The ways of the dear old Kirk of our fathers ; the personnel ; the very outward aspect of our ministers : are not recognisable as those of our boyhood. No more than this restored Cathedral church is like the

Ayrshire kirk of those departed days : where choirs and organs were not : where I remember (being six years old) hearing mention of an awful thing named *to sing in parts* : where no stained windows gave the dim religious light : where the people were prayed for and preached to, and took no part, outwardly, at all. The old faces are away : and we, my Brothers, find ourselves among the Seniors of our vocation : not feeling so much older : though doubtless subdued and changed : and with a very different feeling towards certain things which are sure to come to us.

We have seen the days lengthen, many times : not without some stirring of the vernal hopefulness. The hawthorns have blazed into soft fragrance, and the apple-trees have blossomed for us, fifty remembered times and more. I knew some of you as boys : you are boys to me yet, but your heads are white. And I, the other day a lad in the Moral Philosophy Class at Glasgow, am the retiring Moderator. And I was preaching in the afternoons at St. George's in this city, this time forty years.

Do you remember the long College course : when we who went into the Ministry held our own fairly well against those who went elsewhere, to far higher

worldly rewards? You do remember (I know it) the terribly hard work : all (in our profession) to go for nothing. The Degree in Arts was a great step : you remember how we knelt down, and the grand old Principal capped us. We thought it stamped us as men : though now, looking back, we see that we were only boys. Then the special training for the sacred office : and the eager anticipation of it. Was it not one who was to rank as a preacher high as any, who said in his last session to a friend licensed before him, *I would give anything to get into a pulpit?* Do any youths know that feeling now? Our work suits not many : but it suits them through and through. Nothing else is like it : after all these long and anxious years. You remember the start : the first sermon : not so good as you thought it then, not so bad as you thought it after three years. Ah, the pathos of those old times ! The dead friend (he rose high) who went down that Sunday evening to the seashore and wept ; so far had he fallen short of his hope : while one here and there had a sudden rocket-like rise : more run after at four-and-twenty than ever after. For people are very patient of youthful luxuriance, if the heart be there.

Then the solemn day of your Ordination. That

laying-on of the hands of the Presbytery is never forgot. You could not take it in, that now you had a church of your own : no more than Lord Denman could take it in that he was Chief-Justice of England. And let it not be denied that (with better things, thank God), there was a certain ambition. You had your College standing to maintain, in the face of some who (for an obvious reason) declared that College standing meant nothing. You wished that they might not be ashamed of you at home. The most charming of living historians was wrong when he said to me, *Be thankful you have no prizes* : and then he added very cynical reasons why. But we too have our *quasi-prizes*. They are modest : the world will never hear of them : the educated English-speaking world barely knows of our Church's existence : but they are all there are. And how capriciously they go ! There is what some call Providence and some call Chance : and the Pusher has his innings. One thing let an old man say to his young brothers : *Before honour is humility*. Nothing will come to you in the stage where it would turn your head. And if the fleece of self-conceit be thick, the wind of disappointment will not be tempered.

Varied indeed are our spheres, thus beginning :

thus going on. The beautiful country manse and church: amid rich woods: amid pastoral hills: by the flowing water: by the Perthshire loch. The iron region: smoke by day and flame by night, and the thunder of the ceaseless train. To some, the seaside: the long lonely walks by the water. Looking back, it is mostly Summer: yet there is the Winter surge and roar too, and there is the raw cold March evening. Do you remember the eager Visitation? Far too much one sees now: and the feverish thinking, thinking, Is there any more one can do for the parish? Any more in twenty ways? Then, the laborious preparation of the sermon: and some of us had that absurd committing to memory of what cried aloud that it was not extemporaneous. It is not merely a falsehood, it is an idiotcy, when a man says he got up his sermon in ten minutes: unless indeed in the case where, hearing it, you can quite believe it so. And the heavy pull of the Prayers. We had not the helps that our young brothers have, beginning now. Yet how hearty the services: and how full the churches: far more than in these days, when the sermons are (in a literary sense) incomparably better, and the praise far brighter. There is no doubt at all, great change has come: not in every

respect for the better. These newspaper calculations of the percentage of worshippers to population are startling indeed. They give us all matter for very serious thought.

But the years go over. Cares increase. People are troublesome, a few. Temper is shorter. We are getting through, we are growing old. Sometimes a little disappointed. Year after year : and still in this quiet place ! Far inferior men preferred : will any sane person say that our best men are always put most forward ? I am bold to say, Not. And only God knows what makings have been lost. The power to hold a great multitude comes only by practice. I should like to say much more than there is time for, to-day. Somewhere else, another day. And it would be pleasant to indicate both some who have been set up, and some who have been held down. Talk of a *crucified self* : I have heard pushers do that, and I liked it not. There is the sense of fairness and justice. We want to see fairplay. And *detur digniori* ought to be the rule, even in our modest vocation. I pass from that, to pleasanter thoughts. I think of what I have often seen : I think of the Domestic Life. The young wife comes : and the Manse is bright and hopeful. By and by, the little feet

patter about the stairs: and by the words and ways of little children, the very best that is in the youthful parents is brought out: and they find that all things are become new. The closer drawn together should there be a quiet spot where they often go, where the little child whom Jesus called to Himself sleeps for the Great Awakening. No doubt, terrible cares and troubles come of a married clergy, from which a celibate is free. The daily tale of little anxieties and calculations pushes between us and our work: though we have made up our mind how to think here. Yet one of our best Professors of Divinity once made a speech in my hearing, in which he spoke of sorrows to come if the minister *were so very injudicious* as to take a certain line. And Dr. Liddon, in his last letter to me, said that narrowing circumstances might make necessary what he deemed a necessary evil. Do you remember the sentence in which good Archbishop Tait of Canterbury spoke of his wife and himself: *Always in the enjoyment of ample means?* We read the words, quietly said. And if the Primate remembered how much better off he was than most, he did not say so. Other troubles come into our quiet life (if it be a quiet life): but here is the great one.

They are not worth remembering : but curious instances come back, which say, *Not much worldly consideration.* One knows exactly the meaning of a person of condition liking a minister *because he was so humble* : this, with a significant glance at a minister who was not. You remember the days of Patronage : the kind of men whom certain patrons and their advisers pushed on : men far away from the skirts of the patron's dignity. The principle acted on was quite manifest. But I put that kind of thing away.

Were not the Presbytery meetings of old very kindly and pleasant ? Specially where the fashion held which my revered Father set great store by, of the brotherly social gathering after. And we have lost some cheer in the School Examinations, which came as the March light lengthened. The Examination was always interesting, and the work was fairly done : but the kindly manse ! But we have lost far more in the old Communion. We have no Fastdays now. And on the Sunday, there is no more of that assembling of the communicants and the ministers of half-a-dozen neighbouring parishes, which gave devout folk the blessed sacrament six or seven times in the summer. And do you remember, when we were young, how great

an event in our little life was the coming to the General Assembly? Happy, indeed, is the choice of the season, when the leaves have their first green and the blossoms are in the garden. Never let it be changed!

Then we must take in sail. Our fathers are gone: and we are in the front to go. Still we do our very best: and experience has grown. You preach yet, dear Brothers, with something of the old spirit; but after it you are very tired. Let us be thankful if we can heartily accept the changes which have come in our worship, and our church life: and which are to come. It is sad to grow old, anathematising all the new ways: as some good men have done. But it is a white head the people see in the pulpit: the voice falters sometimes: the lads and girls who come to be young communicants tell you that you baptized them. And it is a warm tie to man or woman, to have been christened either by your Father or yourself. We are not a demonstrative race: but I think, my Brothers, we are generally valued just as highly as we deserve; and sometimes a great deal more. Now all these things are over. There is nothing more quickly or completely forgotten than even one of the great appearances of a great preacher.

Even the preacher himself, so wrought-up in that hour, has quite forgot it. I never forget when first I heard Norman Macleod. Years after, I spoke to him of his sermon at Auchinleck. His answer was, *I never in my life preached there!* I recalled to him text, and sermon, and surroundings. He remembered not all.

So far, Fathers and Brethren, we know. We do not know the rest as it will be to us, though we have seen it in others. There will be something quite peculiar in the case of each of us. We have not felt it yet, the breaking-down of strength and heart: the beloved work dropt from the failing hand: what it will be to go. Many things must be left: little to others, great to you. The precious books, got together with such calculation: the old familiar faces of household possessions, on which our eyes fell daily: all these must go out with this life. God send you be spared to see your children doing for themselves: good, faithful, affectionate, as the sons and daughters of the Manse are bound to be: doing no dishonour to that name. But the clear call will come for each of us. The hand which travelled over those innumerable pages will have to stop. And the voice which was driven hard through these long years will fail. God's will

be done : but we would pray to be allowed to work to the last.

We were Preachers : speaking of ourselves as past. And I call no man a born preacher save the man whom nothing would take away from that work. He may be a great preacher, as great as you like : but he is not a born preacher. A Meteor, flaming for four or five years in a great town, and then giving-up, is not a preacher : no matter how popularly he may preach. The preacher is the man who, with ever fresh interest, goes on teaching and guiding a congregation for thirty years. No, not even to one of those Chairs, from which they 'make ministers.' Curious, the occupants of such places in so many cases anything but masters of the art they presumably teach.

It was among the suffering, and the lowly, that our daily work lay. But *went about doing good* is a grand history ; and that may be ours. And to preach Christ and His gospel is a work that never loses its interest. How can it, if you be fit for it at all? It means the serious talking with our fellowmen of everything which can concern them and us.

What good have we done? With deep humility the very best must look back on many Sundays

and weekdays of life : and from a dying bed, on them all. Yet, I think, we did our little best : and no sham-modesty shall say anything other. And what did we teach ? We trust, Christ's truth : God's love in Him for man's salvation. And some among us have held a singular stand-point, in respect of Doctrine and Life. Evangelical by early training, and by the influence of days when as boy and lad we came under deep personal conviction. High-Church by the æsthetic culture of later days : through the beauty and power of old Church legend and art and prayer and praise. Broad, by farther meditation : seeing round things which once stopped the view. And not these in succession : all these together. Call them moods, or phases : they may be. But they come to very earnest and devout souls. And such souls can feel a true sympathy with the good men who reverently and worthily represent each school.

But we must go. I must cease. Do you not, through all that is said, feel the power of these lengthening days : the stirring of hopefulness ? The pleasant May is here, and it is pleasant, dear Brothers, yet : for all we have gone through : though the best of all good boys have gone out

from your door, and are working far away : though some of the dearest are dead. The letters come, from those left in this world : but you do not meet the dear old face as you go about your duty, nor hear the step on the threshold. And yet, you never wish to be younger. Our times are in the very best Hand. And we shall all be together again, far away. In these hopeful Spring days, we thankfully take the vague promise of Happier and Better that is afloat in this air and light ; but we know that its fulfilment will not be here. Yet these vernal hopes will all come true elsewhere. Let it be as our Poet-Principal said : gone to his rest, where abides the everlasting Spring—

Therefore we will not take these vernal moods
 For promise of sure earthly good to be :
 We will not go to cull through budding woods
 The frail anemone.
 Rather to us shall all this floral sheen,
 That breadth of wood so fresh, so lustrous-leaved,
 Hint of a beauty that no eye hath seen,
 No human heart conceived.

III

THE DEDICATION

III

*THE DEDICATION*¹

‘And the Bush was not consumed.’—EXODUS iii. 2.

WHEN we are dead, every one of this great mass of warm life; this day, and what has been upon this day, will be spoken of by many. Without gift of prophecy one may say *that*. Old people will repeat, for a while, ‘Yes, I remember it well, the Dedication of the new St. Cuthbert’s.’ Then time will slide on, as it has stolen away from ourselves; and the days will be in which no one living will recal this function as something in his own little life.

Here, on this ground whereon Christian worship has been offered, in most diverse ways indeed, for twelve hundred years,—a longer time without a break than on any other ground in Scotland,—a

¹ Preached at the Consecration of St. Cuthbert’s Church, Edinburgh, Wednesday, July 11, 1894.

great and stately church has been dedicated this day to Almighty God ; and to His worship through His Son and by His Spirit. This work has been done for God ; for His glory ; and for nothing less. And there is a touching continuity with centuries gone, even about the material fabric. Every stone that was in the vast building now removed has been built into these walls : even as when that church arose a hundred and twenty years since, every stone of the old church of the middle ages was incorporated in the fabric that was rising. I know that there are strong souls that would smile at this as a sentimental fancy. To many, the fact is beyond words touching. And the tie is real to generations which are gone. We have ‘spared these stones.’

Here, looking towards the rising sun, according to the old custom of our Christian fathers, as those who wait and look for the Coming of Christ ;—for with a pathetic simplicity they took the famous text in its literal meaning, that ‘as the lightning cometh out of the *East*, and shineth even unto the *West*, so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be,’—and the grave, faithfully orientated even in the Martyr West, tells the belief still : we have lifted up our hearts and minds on high in common

prayer for the first time under that roof ; we have rolled our praises towards the skies where Christ went from human view ; and now the brief word of exhortation. It needed not, God knows, that those who are to minister here should seek outside aid ; or go elsewhere for a voice more telling than their own : *that* might not be in all this land, we know. But through kindness of which I dare not allow myself to speak,—a kindness closely bound for thirty years,—I am called to be here. And this, God help His poor unworthy servant, is the very first of sermons innumerable, in this church. It has been long looked forward to, this day, by certain here. Oh for a message worthier of it !

Nor can we quite forget, even through this uplifting and calming worship, that we are here in days of peril for our National Church, with her heroic history. Ay, great peril : I will say that openly : and that from a quarter which I do not hear spoken of. For, as a great National Church ought, she so gathers together in one the most diverse elements, that I see not how she could hold together if she were a National Church no more. I fear me, much, she would rend apart. We, widely diverse in things not wholly vital : diverse in sympathy, in taste and liking, through nature and

training : Narrow and Broad and High if you will : the Protestantism of the Protestant faith, and, beside it, the tender and reverent looking back upon old ways with their fair humanities, seeking not innovation but restoration of what is beautiful and true (as you see in this solemn fabric this day) : are yet, meanwhile, bound in one warm brotherhood by our common love for the grand, heroic, wise and tolerant Church of our fathers : praying for the peace of Jerusalem with the very heartiest of all our prayers.

Some of us could hardly live, could hardly bear this weary world, if our Church were away : if the old names ceased, of the parish, and the parish-church : ay, and the parish-minister, the servant of the parish, ever at the call of each poor soul in it that needed a friend ; and that knew that asking counsel and sympathy and help *there* was only asking his due,—asking a right if you will have it that way, and nothing eleemosynary : keeping his self-respect. Each poor soul under that venerable parochial system had a right to say *My Minister*. And we were proud, every one of us, to be at the call of the humblest. There is a pride which God resists. But not *that*, on either side.

The words would come : I had not meant

them : not yet. But one's heart is full : thinking of what is the characteristic Institution of Scotland. Let us turn from that to what is done to-day. It is a solemn and touching experience to take part, as all of us are doing now, in the dedication of a church which (please God) will be here ages after we are gone. It is a solemn hour. None of us here is likely to see one more so. And I am not thinking mainly that this is the church of a vast and historic parish ; nor that it is to serve a huge congregation, unexampled in the land, an awful charge to good conscientious men : still less of the outstanding place St. Cuthbert's holds, in the midst of the most beautiful of European cities : No, I am thinking, like you, of spiritual significance. Under that immemorial Castle Rock, amid these thick-foliaged July trees, this house of God is infinitely more than a great monumental church, whose opening is an epoch in Scottish Church History. 'They dreamt not of a perishable home, who thus could build !' They looked beyond this little life : as every man does who raises the lowliest place of Christian prayer and praise. Oh how much is meant when people say, Let us build a church ! It is not merely how, on summer Sabbaths, when the graves are green,

the great congregation will gather ; and the psalm will go up, and the prayer ; and the white cloth will be spread for Holy Communion ; and some souls will get strength, some counsel, some comfort : It is the awful Beyond, and the untried experiences there, ever present in the mind : the undiscovered country, with scenes and persons which may all be so strange, where we can have nothing if we have not Christ ! Ah, these great solid walls fade away from our sight, when *that* is borne in upon us : and the great congregation disappears : and we are alone with God and Eternity !

Think, too, that this common worship implies common wants and troubles : the greatest wants and troubles of all. It is because we are all so like one another, that we come to worship here. When you come to this place Sunday by Sunday (would it were every day), it means, unless our coming is a mere sham, that in the deepest and most sacred wants of our nature we are alike : we are brethren : we are one family. We are all sinful : all weak : all perplexed : all weighted with work to be done : many of us weary, many of us anxious, many of us sorrowful : one here and there very nearly beaten. And we are all coming to the same supply. We believe (God help our unbelief)

that there is that to be found here which suits us all. We are all coming to the Saviour's precious blood for the pardon of countless sins : all coming for the Blessed Spirit's help to make us holy and kind and praying people.

But in all our minds, to-day, there is the pervading remembrance of the great church which is entering, now, on its long ages (so we trust) of kindly and uplifting helpfulness. And what a contrast to that which was before it! I know that old fabric was dear to many. The homeliest place grows precious through the old remembrances which gather round it. The old familiar faces may not be the most beautiful ;—but they are very dear. We who were boys in Kyle know *that*. Above criticism! Like Mont Blanc above it: both the plain church and the simple praise. Give us them back: and as never in the most august church of Christendom, we see the venerable Elders and the never-forgotten worshippers through a mist of tears. I would give up, to-day, the loveliest music you can take from Mendelssohn, to hear again the voice of a great multitude lifted up under the arch of heaven on the evening of a July Communion, in homely Martyrdom: in *Such pity as a father hath, unto his children dear*.

But God has said it, The old order must change. It is impossible to keep for ever the dear old way. You might just as well wish that the children should never grow older, and that nobody should ever die. By inevitable development, this stately church had to come, and this brighter worship: and though the glamour of the long-past has such hold on our hearts,—that long-past with trees always blossoming, and days which were always summer days, which is as a Golden Age,—yet, in sober earnest, can we deny that the change is for the better? It would have been a startling paradox in Scotland when one was a boy, and now it is self-evident truism, that we ought, in our public worship, to give to God our best, in architecture, in art, in music, in the wonderful felicity of prayers centuries old. And we have learnt, too (for it is impossible to resist historical truth), that much of what was so dear to our childhood, and of what abides in the hallowed memories of our childhood, was really not the good old way of the Kirk: it was something forced upon us, in the face of the protest of our best men and ministers: and we are now not innovating at all, but simply (in the main) restoring the better way of the Church of Scotland Reformed, not (as has been said) Deformed. If

John Knox had entered an Ayrshire Kirk sixty years since, it is a historic certainty that the great Reformer must have asked himself, What Christian Church is this whose worship I see? And then he must have gone on to say to himself, *The only thing of which I am perfectly sure, is, that it cannot be the Church of Scotland.* And if Alexander Henderson, second only to Knox, had been told that certain young ministers, copying an English way, had introduced the innovation of concluding their sermons with an ascription of glory to the Blessed Trinity, Alexander Henderson would have answered, *Why, every sermon that ever I preached ended as of course in that way!* The faded manuscripts abide, to testify to all who have eyes to see.— No, not innovation : restoration. And not restoration, as has been foolishly suggested, of that which is Roman. No, restoration of that which is Protestant : that which is Scottish : that which is distinctively our own. And everything good, true, solemn and beautiful, from the very first, belongs to us as much as to any. The old Church, Reformed : not a brand-new one.

One thing I should like to say here, where it is so backed-up by facts which most people know. While we desire to lift up worship in our churches :

to make much of Praise, and Prayer, and most of all of Holy Communion : while we are determined that in what after all is by emphasis the *House of Prayer*, the common worship of the congregation of Christ's people shall ever be rendered so earnestly, reverently, and deliberately, with such manifest purpose and intention, that no mortal shall speak, or think, of it as a mere *preliminary* to the really interesting thing, the Sermon : I add, in the strongest words I can find, that there is no thought to make little of preaching. *That* is to abide all it ever was. It shall never be thrust into a corner. It is not likely in any of our churches, and least of all in this, to be the signal for a tumultuous exodus of the flock ; to be the thing from which people hasten away. Human nature sways us all. And forasmuch as those of our ministers who would make most of praise and prayer, are beyond question or comparison our best preachers : and forasmuch as the best of them, if they are not preachers are nothing at all : it is inconceivable that they should belittle the only thing they can do : not to say, the thing which some of them do so supremely well. The Church of Scotland is a Church of preachers : a Church

that stands upon its preaching. And it never will be anything else. God forbid it should!

‘Not for the doctrine, but the music there’: is not going to be said of the worshippers of the Kirk. And yet, the music is to be our very best.

There is to be no misunderstanding. Let none here fancy that I am belittling worship and sacrament in comparison with preaching. I have heard that unwisely done. Long ago, when one who has risen as high as may be in the greatest National Church in Christendom, had attended an Edinburgh communion; and remarked to a saintly minister of the Church how much preaching had gone to it; the saintly man replied that preaching was far more than sacrament: that ‘St. Paul spoke almost with contempt of the sacraments in comparison with preaching, saying that Christ sent him forth *not* to baptize but to preach the gospel.’ Well I remember the grave reproof of one quite as good and a great deal wiser: ‘I doubt whether St. Paul would speak with contempt of anything which Christ had expressly commanded His ministers and people to do.’ And who can forget ‘Teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name,’—Who can forget ‘This do in remembrance of Me’?

‘And the Bush was not consumed.’ This great fabric reminds us, touchingly, how the Kirk of Scotland has held on through these ages. There is no charm to me about a Communion which has not a venerable building among all its churches. I recal words solemnly said to me by the greatest Anglican preacher of this generation: and he was quoting the words of the most outstanding human being of this generation: ‘I see not how, without the fabrics, the visible continuity of the Church could be maintained.’ And he went on to quote other words, burning in their pathos: which I will not repeat, but which I have never forgotten. And on this hallowed ground, consecrated of a truth by far more than the solemn Dedication of this unforgettable day, it is borne upon us, to the quick of our nature, how various the forms have been in which the Visible Church has appeared in this land. Yet, through all, hearty worship was possible, was accepted. The prayers lifted up on this ground, through these centuries, went, every one of them, to the right place. Through all, it was the Church of Scotland! And, as our Prime Minister wisely said on a great occasion, ‘There is not a man who has Scottish blood running in his veins who does not feel the profoundest attachment to Her!’

Woe worth the degenerate Scot in whom that was not so!

But that is not my line. And as I close, you will pardon my thinking rather of the unutterable pathos of the daily life which will be linked (if the world changes not) with this stately church now dedicated to the glory of God Almighty, through His Son, and by His Spirit: and to bear for ever the name of His good servant St. Cuthbert, long at rest. How fast the Sundays will come round, to those who minister: What remembrances, in hearts far away, on the other side of the world, will gather round the place! I see the lad, going, to return no more, stealing in by himself for a last look of the church of his baptism. I see the sweet young girl, wedded before that Holy Table, who will turn from it to find her early rest in a foreign country, far away. I see the weary old pilgrim, borne into the place dear by many services and sacraments: and I hear the congregation sing, as that great poet said, a 'Christian psalm': Christian psalm though written by Moses, the man of God. But while I must name such things, because I have known them so often, I look on to that which has more cheer. I see the fabric growing in beauty, year by year, as consecrated wealth brings its

offering. I see the dim religious light of coming days. I see the multitudes for whom the great church will be too narrow. I hear the hearty psalm, and the jubilant anthem. The Holy Table bears the white cloth : the young and the old receive the Bread and the Water of Life. And voices which have spoken straightest to my heart,—God spare them long to do it,—will tell, as often heretofore, the old, old story, of Jesus and His Love.

IV

THE INEVITABLE CHOICE

IV

THE INEVITABLE CHOICE ¹

‘ See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.’—DEUT. xxx. 15.

A MONTH ago, young friends, you brought here as your preacher an honoured Prelate of the great National Church South of the Tweed: who had never set foot in St. Andrews before; and who when he preached in your Chapel lifted up his voice for the first time in this city,—a voice which few who heard him on that or any other occasion will easily forget. Now, you have turned just the other way: and by your invitation one is here this morning, and pleased to come, who has been at home as few can be in this sacred place for near a quarter of a century; and who has been permitted to address successive generations of St. Andrews students times beyond numbering.

¹ Preached in St. Salvator's College Chapel, St. Andrews, Sunday, December 15, 1889.

And yet, this is something very fresh and new. Though I have known, through that long time, what it is to see the bright young faces elsewhere, and to be cheered by as close and sympathetic attention as ever rewarded a preacher ; it was where the members of the University formed part of a general congregation in a church not specially their own, and could not quite be addressed as by one speaking to them alone. It was in plainer buildings than your beautiful chapel : where one had to seek consolation in the reflection that the great thing about a church after all is the congregation. Here, amid these academic surroundings, everything brings back vividly, and touchingly, the feeling of old student-days : the long Glasgow streets ; the grim old quadrangles, all swept away. November had gathered us in, many of us, from rural scenes, where fading nature was still in glory : where the trees were thick with changed leaves, where the days were sunshiny and the skies blue ; and the starry heaven after dark was a sublime miracle to behold. But there, every leaf was gone : fogs shortened the day at its rising and its setting : there was no end to the vista of the unlovely street : we had stepped straight into gloomy Winter. And yet, to a hard student,—and we

were hard students,—it seemed all the better. There was a fitness in taking to stern work in those gloomy days. One was not missing anything, in turning from the desolation without even to something within that was a heavy pull upon one's modest faculty. And it was a hopeful time: as yours is now.

Your invitation has carried me far into the past, when I was a youth like you. The old walls rise again, the old courts surround me: bringing with them the professors and the fellow-students, the moral atmosphere, all the life, of those departed days. Strange, and touching beyond words,—more so than you, young friends, can yet take in,—the contrast which is here: the Institution so venerable, with those five long and troubled centuries behind, and the fresh and hopeful youth of most of the generation which represents it now, and carries on its grand traditions. But the thing which pleases one most, looking at you and thinking of you, is that not one of you can have spoiled his life: that there is untold potentiality and promise of good under this roof to-day. As the old professor said to little Samuel Rutherford, 'It's ill to wit what God may make of you yet.' All is hopeful. You are going, as we older pray,

to avoid all our blunders, and to do better than our best.

Some preachers like, specially, to be frank with the congregation. And so I cannot help telling you, to begin, that though I have come most willingly to preach to you this morning, I have had some difficulty in thinking of a subject. If I had to preach to you each Sunday for six months, or even six weeks, I should easily find abundance to say to you : but when I am called to preach, just for once, to a congregation so special, and so interesting,—earnestly wishing to say what may do some of you good, and not to lose a chance,—how I wish I had a message given me for you by God's Spirit! Perhaps it has been given. And I have been led to a most general text, which may make you think of all the life you are living, day after day, at College and at home, in term and in vacation,—and think to what it all tends. It is all tending to something. You are making your choice. You are growing now, into what you will be as toiling anxious men : and what you will be as men you will most likely be for ever. You will carry with you into the other world the character you shall have formed here : and the bliss or woe of your life beyond the grave will be mainly the out-

come of that. To be good, is to be happy here, so far as that may be: Happy, you will find out, is not quite the word. But to be good, is to be perfectly happy hereafter: 'He that is holy, let him be holy still.' *That* is what we call Heaven. Your life in the world we cannot now see will be an unbroken continuation of your life here in these student days: and you will be there, always, just what you are growing to be Here.

It is strange, and touching, how at the very last, when words must be few, and the desire is to gather up into a brief sentence the sum of all past teaching, the weary soul goes back to the simple yet sublime foundation-truth implied in those words of Moses which form this day's text; and rests there. It ought not to be forgot in this College how two St. Andrews students were sent for home when their mother died. Here is the short story as one of them told it, when he was a great man, and his mother had been far away for fifty years. 'We were made to kneel at her bedside. She kissed and blest us; and the last words I ever heard her pronounce now vibrate on my ear,—Farewell! and oh, be good.' I was present at the parting of a lad who had been the stay of mother and brothers from those to whom he had

been all. He took the hand of the brother next him in years : and looking earnestly at the poor sobbing woman and an awe-stricken little boy, he said, ‘ *Try and do as weel’s ye can.*’ I have listened to the greatest orators of the age : I never heard the sentence that came straighter to my heart. Only the other day, one well entitled to be called a great Head-Master died. Just an hour after he went, all the School was gathered in the chapel, to hear his last words to those he had so loved and toiled-for : dictated a little before his death, with an injunction that they should be read to the School by the head-boy. The words were few. First, grateful thanks for loyalty and affection : and indeed these were the happy terms on which they lived there. Then, ‘ I wish, as a dying man, to record that lovingkindness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life : that firm faith in God is the sole firm stay in mortal life ; that all other ideas but Christ are illusory ; and that Duty is the one and sole thing worth living for.’ Ay, the choice must be made : life and good, or death and evil.

Some of you know how one of the most illustrious of your Rectors was in wont to say that after all speculation and all philosophy, the *Granite* of the spiritual world, which bears up everything

else, is just this : that there is an awful and eternal difference between Right and Wrong, and that every man ought to strive to do Right. And George Eliot, in the latter days, used to say that of the three grand beliefs, two must be given up : a personal God and a Future Life : and therefore all the more would she cleave to the one unshaken fact of Duty. Then what is the sum of all Carlyle's teaching unless it be that there can be no amalgamation of Heaven and Hell : no blurring the tremendous entities of Right and Wrong.

Now, think of that text.

Moses said it, first, to Israel. But that is what God says to each of us : to every one who has a conscience, a sense of Right and Wrong, and sense to see we ought to do right and shun wrong. This is taken for granted, and built upon, in all God's Revelation : in all Christ's Atoning work : in all the Holy Spirit's operation. Christ wants a peculiar people, zealous of good works : that is the test. All the Law and the Prophets take that for the test. Of course, we know how the foundations go down into the ground, of Christian faith and doctrine. All Right, for us, taught as we have been, is done for Christ's cause and by His grace. But we must really take

something for granted. We understand all that as Christ and His hearers mutually understood it, without saying fully. Now, it is not that I take on myself to say this text to any. God is saying it to us all, young and old together. It is a choice we must each make. Not, like the fabled one, for once: but day by day, continually. It is the resultant of all our life. God make each of us choose life and good, and turn away from death and evil!

Each generation has to begin again: to make the choice for itself: both between good- and ill-doing, and between right- and wrong-judging. You, young friends, must make up your mind for yourselves, both what you are to think and what you are to do. We of an older generation used to fancy that our children would have the benefit of our dearly-bought experience: that they would start from where we had attained-to. In worldly advantage it is so. And surely there is nothing which any parent worth counting holds so precious in his own success, as that it enables him to give his boys a far better start than he had himself. But it is not so, unless in a very modified sense, in the spiritual order. The weary trial and probation must just be gone through again; with all its

risks. You must be tried, for yourselves, whether you will go to right or left. And there is no more sorrowful sight to the old, than to see the young going wrong just as they themselves went. If they could but really take in what they will make of it! In the arts and refinements of life, we are in incalculable advance of our fathers even a hundred years since. But in the great moral question of our life, we each begin as did Adam.

The question whether a boy is to be a good boy or a bad boy, must be decided by the boy himself. The question whether a young man coming to the University is to make the best of these precious years, or not, must, after all College counsel and home entreaty, be decided by the young man for himself. A bad education, indeed, is generally successful: I mean, If you diligently train a human soul to evil, it is likely to be evil. But of a good education,—ay the very best,—who can foresee the issue?—You cannot *make a man good*. He must (by the help of God's grace indeed) make himself so.

Not a word now, not one, by way of explaining to you what is meant by Good and Right. You all know *that*, perfectly well. There is something always close at hand which will tell you that.

And knowing things I know, thoughts come into my mind which are better understood, without saying, between you and me. Frankly, I have great faith in you. That which is the black stain upon certain great Universities elsewhere, is hardly known among Scotch students: God be thanked. As for a general definition of the line Christ would have us take, I know nothing much better than what my first Professor of Divinity said to a flippant person who asked him the way to Heaven: *Take the first turning to the Right, and keep straight on!*

Believe it, young friends, the worst man on earth would not wish his boy to grow up such as he!

And if a gray-headed sinner is not ashamed of his ways in the presence of ingenuous youth, this is because he is a very black sinner indeed.

It has a wonderful power to keep us cheerful, if we are trying every day by God's help to do right, and to keep down what is bad in us: if we keep going to Christ, and asking Him to help our own best endeavours to put down in us the tendency to laziness, or half-hearted work, or ill-temper, or harsh speaking, or to anything unkind, untrue, or impure. And I tell you what you will

find out as you grow older. This daily endeavour to be good, the New Testament would say holy, like Christ, will be a spring of interest which will never fail, when other interests fail with your failing self. You will never get tired of it. Here is a thing which, if you honestly want to get you are sure to get. Here is a thing which if you get it will not disappoint you. That is not the way of this world. Then, wrong-doing spoils the enjoyment of all simple pleasures ;—which are the purest and most lasting. No bad fellow, be he undergraduate or Doctor, can be happy in looking at one of our grand Winter sunsets ; or at a blossoming tree : or in taking his written pages in his hand and saying to himself, *Now I have done that to my very best !* His taste demands the cayenne of vice : God pity and mend him. Even to little things, carry out conscientious doing. To be strict and careful in all little duties means that twenty times a day you are ranging yourselves in the great fight of the universe : in which even John Stuart Mill, great man and honest sorrowful unbeliever, declared that Right is visibly gaining, and must conquer at last. To habitually do wrong, even in little things, is to knock your head against God's universe. You will have constant little

pangs of vague remorse. You will have the pervading sense that you are out of gear and bearing with all right things. You may not see it as yet, but you will find it out, Wrong-doing is the thing God hates : and it cannot prosper in the long-run. There is that on it which will blast it. But as for Duty : going and toiling at stiff tasks when you would far rather not : practising self-denial : never doing work just in a kind of way : thinking of them at home when temptation comes and daffing it aside : in brief, as for Right faithfully done ; think of Wordsworth's grand lines :

Stern Law-giver ! Yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace ;
Nor know we anything so fair,
As is the smile upon thy face !

I must say a word here : Somebody may want it. When you go wrong, and do wrong, as you often will ;—Make a new beginning ! Forget past failures and errors : No worthy mortal will ever remind you of them ; and strive after a new and better way, by God's help. The New Testament calls this *Repentance* : and we must all be repenting, many times. Make a fresh start. Take warning from the past : but don't let it hang round your neck, crushing you down. Never you think

you have got into such trouble that you can't be worse. Judas might have done better than hang himself. Go and tell your Professor : Tell your father or mother : and you will wonder how things will be put straight, and you have another chance. The things that finally ruin men are done *after* they have concluded that the case is desperate.

A man once said, when things looked bad for the country,—‘ Ah, well, it will last my time.’ He was a king ; but he was a miserable contemptible wretch all the same. Even to plant a tree that will be growing after you are dead, has in it something ennobling. To all men, but the basest, it is of profound interest what you young men, who are to form the next generation, shall be. And people who have children of their own do not live very long till the interest of this life is all in their children. Their own career, they feel, is sadly blotted, with blots which will never quite go out : They have taken a wrong turning at some critical time,—got into a wrong line, and can never come right. We are hopeful, sometimes, that all our errors will be avoided in the fresh experiment of a new life : anxious, often, how it is to fare with our boys when we are far away. We think of them grown-up, anxious, gray : What-like will they be

and where? What will you have made of life, you young men, in thirty years? It will just be about thirty years. Your life will be made or marred long before then. Then, if you are in this world, you will be mainly reaping what you have sown; God knows how your fortune may vary. 'He putteth down one and setteth up another.' It is chiefly a matter of what some call Luck;—which means God's Election; and its decisions are very arbitrary and strange. No one can say which of you is to get on best. But you MUST make a good thing of life, if you choose good. You MUST end well. If you grow, here, fit for a better Place,—pure, kind, magnanimous, hard-working, unselfish,—you will not be a Failure.

Now how strangely they come back to one to-day, looking on your young faces, the hopeful companions of early student days! And oh, God's Election: How strange! never stranger than in this: that the very best and most hopeful were the first to go. Tait to the throne at Canterbury: Halley, 'the man that beat Tait,' to his early tomb. Tennyson, till four-score, to lift-up the English-speaking world: Hallam to 'the grave that has been wept above, With more than mortal tears.' I do not pretend to know, any more than did

Socrates, which had the better : only that the ways ran far apart. There is no more vivid recollection in some minds than of being told that such a one had come back from College very distinguished, but smitten with decline. Then the walk of several miles through country lanes to the farmhouse. He was not much changed, to our boyish eyes. The face was flushed : a spot on each cheek too red : there was a short cough : even a boy remarked how the poor mother looked at her son. Not a word was spoken of illness. He said Good-bye. You came away with a companion who was grown-up ; and when you reached the highway you said, '*Surely there's not much the matter.*' But the answer, gravely said, was, '*Ah, poor Ralph is dying.*' The hawthorns were masses of fragrance then. But amid the first chill of the Winter there came the announcement in the newspapers, you being hard at student-work : the name, the age, and just these words, '*A young man of great promise.*' Let me testify, for one, that those who went were the youths who appeared the likeliest to come to something more than considerable. Hardly less touching is the rare case one knew, a College friend who early in life rose to a really high place : one that the world would recognise as such. He had

reached a level where his life and work were dignified and pleasant as the life of only a very few can be : and then the feeble fibre in his bodily constitution told : he drooped and died : hardly in middle age. He had preserved all his College exercises : a brother looked over them (I knew them well) ; and burnt them with a few tears. It has to be done. The pages we covered will have to go. We shall not mind, then.

When Solomon told his son to *get wisdom*, he did not tell him how to get it : and awful and heart-breaking was the irony of the event. The son of the wisest man, and so solemnly charged to get wisdom, stands out in the history of the Race just the very greatest fool. Not but what the streak of folly was very apparent in the father too. Dear young friends, there need not be that crushing disappointment, either to the old who counsel or the young who are counselled, in the grand matter of the attainment commended to you to-day. Ask for it in the right quarter : seek the Blessed Spirit to help you : do your own honest best : and sure as God rules you will be good and happy,—as much as may be here. I shall not see you when your hair is gray, and when you are bearing the burden of the latter years : but I know

that then you will be able to testify to another generation that the plan had answered and that the choice was wise. Not every one of you has in him the makings of a great lawyer, or artist, or scientist, or soldier, or divine. Not every one of you has in him the makings of mathematician or scholar. God gives us diversity of gifts ; and the world is the richer for it. But one thing you may all do : You may live a noble, pure, unselfish life ; and do good to some. You may stand by God and good against death and evil. Life is before you ; and here is the very best you can do with it : avoiding our errors ; gaining by our experience, bought with many a stumble : delivered, if it be God's will, from our cares.

You will not think all this a matter of small account. It goes to the foundation of things : It includes all the solemn verities of the spiritual order. The sum of all that prophets have taught, and psalmists beautified : all the uplifting of devotion, of praise and prayer : all the glory of beneficent and heroic action : all the teaching of Christ Himself : found just on the homely but sublime truth, understandable from infancy, that there is infinite and eternal difference between Right and Wrong ; and that our work here is to

choose the Right. You never forget the doctrinal foundations : how love to the Blessed Redeemer Who died and lives for us, is the great spring of all right-doing : how the awfulness of wrong-doing is burnt into our memory by the Cross : how the Holy Spirit must help us in our daily endeavours to do right, and to conquer our own special temptation. Even people who had never seen the New Testament had found out the need of help above ourselves.

Speaking to the old, it is a vain thing to appeal to spiritual ambition. The lowliest place, where there is rest : Under His pierced feet will suffice. But with you, there is a hopefulness : your hearts are not yet wearied, as they are sure to be. Think, then, young soldiers of the Cross, what mountain peaks lie before you to climb : mountain peaks, but all of them accessible ! There is far more to be made of heart than of head. The improvement possible here is absolutely limitless. It might be mockery to say to the very brightest of you, Try to be as bright as Shakspeare. But, God be thanked, it is no mockery to say to any one of you,—Try to be as good as Christ !

V

TRIED BY PROVOCATION

V

*TRIED BY PROVOCATION*¹

‘And Aaron held his peace.’—LEVITICUS x. 3.

FOR old, and for young, here is a lesson : an example. There are greater duties, and lesser duties, we know : but I am bold to say that times come, in the life of man and woman, in which there is not a more bounden duty, than to be silent : and, most certainly, not one thing which it is more for our advantage to do. We may all make many mistakes : we have, all of us, made many : but never a more regrettable mistake,—never one that more lowered us in the judgment of friends and people not friends,—never one on which we looked back with deeper shame and humiliation, than when we opened our lips and spoke, in the minute wherein we ought to have kept silence.

It is rather by what you say, than by what you

¹ St. Mary's, St. Andrews : Sunday, August 6, 1893.

do (Believe it, young people), that you make enemies. A smart saying, very bright and clever and just a little ill-natured, has put a spoke in the wheel, and changed a man's whole career. Not necessarily for the worse : though that is the more likely event. But over all these things there rules God's Election. One has known what should have spoiled a career, make it.

But this is a fringe of my subject. We have to think of far more serious things.

It was an awful blow that had fallen upon Aaron : just as heavy as could fall. It was a knock-down blow : one of those which stun ; which crush into the dust : which are like to kill. For some grievous and daring act of profanity as to God's worship,—something done, as is now supposed, when the wretched men were intoxicated,—his two sons were awfully punished. There is no need to go into details : that is not my subject : but Nadab and Abihu were, in a moment, stricken dead as by lightning. Moses said just a word to Aaron, as to how this came to be. 'And Aaron held his peace.'

He was stunned, perhaps, and could not speak. Perhaps he could have said a great deal, if he had allowed himself to speak at all. They were his

sons : they had once been innocent little boys : it was very hard that for a thoughtless deed, done when they hardly knew what they were doing, they should be smitten down in this frightful way. But no : these things shall not even be thought : To accuse God is a thing that must not be, that must be stifled : God's way must be right. But there are efforts which are too great for poor humanity. When Moses pointed out that this *had to be*, that it was only what was to be looked-for ; you could not expect Aaron to say Amen : that would have been too much. He could not speak out and declare that his sons had deserved it all. But as the blasted corpses lay on the earth before him, and the people looked on in consternation, he could bow, silently, under the fearful judgment. He was not able to open his mouth. Perhaps he durst not. If he had spoken then, he might have uttered words to be repented-of.

This is all that need be said of Aaron to-day. Of course we all remember that he is not the only one recorded in holy scripture as silent under God's afflicting hand. We never forget David, King and Psalmist, how he said 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth ; because Thou didst it.'

We are to turn to ourselves ; and to think that

times are sure to come to us in which this must be our way : to hold our peace. When a heavy blow falls upon us,—and such have fallen upon the best,—silence is sometimes all that is possible, and it is almost always the wiser way. If, really meaning it, you can speak as the patient patriarch spoke,—*that* is well : it may help another. I have known more than one or two who, when they came to be tried as he was, did what he did, and said what he said. Who can forget that old story, of a most miserable day gone for thousands of years ? ‘ Fell down upon the ground, and worshipped. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ But I confess to you that many times, going on before the coffin towards the waiting grave, I have felt as though the grand and hopeful words were too much to say : as though they transcended what was possible from the bereaved and stricken heart. Times without number, passing up the nave of that great but desolate cathedral, with the Spring hopefulness in the mild air and on the turf growing green underfoot, the solemn sentences have been spoken : and one thought of Aaron’s silence, and of David without a word,—then and there. For such words should not be spoken unless they are deeply meant : and

very blessed is the mourner who can deeply mean them. No one has more heartily gone along with those devout and good men who have in these days brought back the touching and beautiful custom of laying the Christian dead to the long rest with the sublime words that tell of gospel hope, and of our Blessed Saviour the Resurrection and the Life: the restoration, surely, is to that which is better. But I will acknowledge that there is justification, too, for the silent and solemn burial which for a time was characteristic of our country. There are few here who have not seen those most dear to them laid in the mould in that undemonstrative way, not unbefitting our quiet race. And that silence implies no want of feeling. Never did human heart feel more keenly than the heart of the high-priest of whom my text tells. To those who can understand, silence can convey more than speech. In that hour in which he thought and felt what no words could say, 'Aaron held his peace.'

But neither is this exactly what I desire to say to you from this text. The lesson for us all is rather the wisdom of keeping silence under provocation. Men and women of experience are afraid to let themselves get angry. They dread

Provocation more than they dread Pain. And with good reason.

There is not an experience, among the experiences of ordinary life, which more searchingly tries us, and tests us, than Provocation. There is not an experience out of which many good people come worse. There is nothing on which decent folk look back with greater humiliation, and regret, than on what they said and did when provoked : specially when provoked by the lesser offences which must needs come.

When a blow falls upon us which is plainly God's doing,—some great bereavement, or great bodily pain,—what we call an inevitable accident,—something in which man's malice or folly has no hand,—we are able to bow beneath the chastening rod : we try to look up to our kind and wise Saviour, and to say *Thy will be done*. We take that humbly, and uncomplainingly. But it is quite another thing when the blow is given by a human hand : specially when it seems to have been given for an unworthy reason : out of spite, or envy, from causeless dislike, or the desire to mortify, and give pain. And unhappily it is too manifest that the trouble which man causes to man, is commonly of the like discreditable origin. When

one man says to another,—‘ We must trip up such a person,—try to prevent some work to which he has given much toil and time from succeeding,—try to keep him back from something he would like,—*for the disappointment would do him a great deal of good*’ : we all know exactly what that means. Jealousy, malignity ; a wretched delight in giving pain. That sham about doing the man good, takes in nobody. And there is no doubt at all that people who bow humbly under far worse when it comes by Christ’s own doing, are often found to fret and murmur bitterly at injury done them by their fellow-man. And I will say at once, that it is only to God Almighty that we are bound to say *Thy will be done*. We are fully entitled to sit in judgment on the doings of any mortal, how great soever. No man is infallible : no man is safe always to do right. Only to One can rational being say, without abnegating his birthright of reason, *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth ; because Thou didst it*. But, whatever you may think, of the unjust or unkind doing of a fellow-mortal ; beware what you say ! If you are wise, you will hold your peace : in the hour of the irritating sense of personal injury. No man in this world can quite keep the dignity of humanity, the sense

of self-respect, while complaining that he has been ill-used. Practically, very few will care : even if it be quite certain you have been. In fact, your hearers may probably think you have not been ill-used at all. Most people get quite as much as they deserve. One, here and there, gets a great deal more : but that is God's Sovereignty : He is the great disposer. If, under provocation, you allow yourself to speak, to pour out what is in your heart ; you will let yourself down most grievously in the judgment of those whose judgment you most value : you will show a pettiness of mind and a bitterness of temper which you did not think was in you : you will say a great deal that is unworthy, unfair, and perhaps even untrue : and by the very act of giving it expression you will greatly aggravate all that is regrettable and humiliating within you. Few people quite realise how feeling is intensified, and the most wrong-headed and extravagant convictions confirmed, by talking them out. For that is commonly done with weary iteration. I tell you what I have seen ; and grieved over.

A word more must be said of this : It needs to be looked straight at. When I speak of the un-wisdom of yielding to this temptation (which no

doubt it is most natural to do), I am not thinking of the case in which the speaker *breaks out*, and goes to an extreme which is a discredit to a rational being. We have all seen that unhappy instance : a man to whom it has pleased God to give a supersensitive nervous system (possibly a very clever and lovable man) suddenly firing up into violent passion in which he becomes incoherent and almost inarticulate ; quite going off his head for the time. You may have seemed quite cool : you may have retained an entire fluency : you may have said very clever and incisive things, which *brought down* the by-standers. But oh, you had better have held your peace. If it be a personal offence you are avenging : if the element of personal interest or estimation be present at all : believe it, you have shewn up yourself more cruelly than any one else. Ay, even though you have right upon your side. It is a sorrowful thing to see a truly outstanding and deserving person, old or young (of course worst when old) step down from his pedestal, inconceivably lessen and lower himself in your estimation, by bursting forth in sudden wrath, though not one syllable be said but what is certainly true. Ah, the fallen idol one has seen ! Dear friends, be advised. Never speak a

word under personal irritation. Never say a word of a human being who is more successful and prosperous than yourself, if you cannot honestly commend him. You will make a poor figure. There is not a sadder thing, than to hear some really good folk stedfastly running-down all who approach near themselves in their own vocation. It is a spot on the sun : and a very grievous one. And the best and greatest have not been free from it. Saying this, it is impossible to help thinking of the recent biography of one who was in his day the greatest man in the great Church of England. He was most shamefully ill-used. The way in which he was held back was a glaring scandal. But it was not for him, nor for his son, to say so. Everybody knew it, without that. And it would have been fine, if he had held his peace. Possibly it would have been superhuman.

Remark : It is well to be angry on great questions which touch the awful difference between Right and Wrong ; and where your own personality is not involved in any degree. Range yourself, ever so resolutely, on God's side of that great dividing-line of His universe. Even if you speak too warmly, few will blame you here. In these days there is, in some, a disposition to shade off

the tremendous fact of Good or Evil. What Carlyle called *The Heaven and Hell Amalgamation Movement* must evermore be vehemently protested against. But this is a totally different matter. The thing to be guarded against is that which will be regarded by most people as, latently or openly, standing up for yourself. That, when you are angry, not at all! Silence! For your own sake.

Aaron, we know, was not always wise: any more than Solomon, or Socrates, or St. Peter, or any human being except Christ. But he shewed himself a wise man on that day when he *held his peace*. Ah, there is that within us which if permitted to burst its flood-gates, would astonish us, would frighten us. We did not think it was there: that flood of bitter feeling, of wrath, of discontent. And not merely should you keep silence till that evil hour be past, because if you speak you are sure to say what you will be ashamed of, but because to speak out what is in you will fan the flame which burns within. To express feeling, will intensify it. You will say worse than you mean; and you will gradually come to mean the worst you say. And perhaps you have acquaintances who will take a vile pleasure in beholding you on that down-grade, and in giving you a push along

it. I have beheld calculating wire-pullers enjoying the excessive vehemence with which a truly-great man was expressing himself; and trying still further to excite him. I was angry, with an anger of which I am not ashamed. And I knew well that such creatures were capable of repeating all this, to the great man's disadvantage.

Of course, it is always and everywhere doing the Devil's work, to try to lead any mortal into temptation. Yet one has known comparatively-decent men, who would not exactly have advised anybody to break any one of the Ten Commandments, who would deliberately set themselves to irritate and embitter a human being a thousand times better than themselves, in the hope that he might break-out into something extravagant. I have seen them succeed. And I have heard them chuckle over it afterwards. It is a sad sight to see a coarse-grained, thick-skinned creature doing what he would call *Drawing* a great and good man. And great and good men are many times unduly sensitive. Here is what makes the devoutest and best stedfastly stay away from certain deliberative councils. It is too much for them. I do not say but what this is their own fault; or misfortune. But we all continually say solemn words which

run, *Lead us not into temptation.* It is manifest that for a long time to come the civilized world is to be governed by Parliaments, Conferences, Councils of divers kind. Let us be thankful that there are good and wise men who feel themselves drawn to such gatherings: who can bear to hear their most cherished opinions contradicted there; and who can set forth their own views and the reasons for them without undue excitement, and above all without personal abuse of their opponents. For it is sorrowfully obvious that when many men come to be tried by the provocations of such meetings and debates, the trial is too great for them. Nowhere is this more lamentably apparent than in what are called Church-Courts. Such things are very mortifying to see and hear. *Let me get out of this, for any sake:* I have heard a truly-good man say, with anguish in his face. And God knows it was no wonder. Let us hope that next morning some men were heartily ashamed of what they had said and done. They had not been themselves: to use the expressive phrase of old-fashioned Scotch folk, *their corruption had been stirred-up:* And no good Christian could see the result but with deep sorrow. Ah, words may be said which though repented next day in

dust and ashes, can never be forgot : but will abide as a black stain upon a good reputation. Such as cannot go well through such provocation, should keep away from it. Far better, for such, to have been with Daniel in the lions' den. They might have suffered there. But it is much worse to sin.

I do not think that in the range of what may be called lesser sins, there is one on which really-good and sensible people look back with so deep humiliation, as their sayings and doings when tried by Provocation. Both because they feel, intensely, how foolish, unworthy, spiteful, and unfair their behaviour was, and are thus humbled before themselves ; and also because they know, instinctively, how severely their best friends condemn what they said and did, and how long and vividly their worst friends will remember it. One was grieved to hear the story told, after long years, of an act of hasty folly in a saintly man, which ought to have been buried in oblivion. Let us try to remember people at their best. But there are folk who, by a fatal necessity, always remember people at their very worst. And such folk, I have remarked, have likewise the faculty of drawing-out the very worst that is in the people they converse with,

Do not fancy that I am offering to you what may be called a Moral Essay. Here is vital Christian duty : to be done by the constant grace of the Blessed Spirit (it will never be done without that) : and to be made matter of continual and most earnest prayer. Yet listen to this counsel, old and young : Do not allow yourself to get angry. Of course you understand what I mean. Keep off from people who rub you the wrong way. Keep away from subjects which you cannot discuss calmly. And do not speak when you are selfishly angry : that is, irritated by some personal injury. Few have done so without repenting it. Do not speak about any mortal towards whom you have an extreme antipathy. You will not do justice either to him or to yourself. Do not, on any account, write a letter when angry. Or if it would relieve your heart to write it, be sure you do not send it.

Doubtless, dear friends, though we do all we can to keep out of harm's way, we shall each come to be tried by Provocation. Let HIM grant that dwelleth above that we come through it as fairly as He sees good. It is not likely that the experience will be such that we shall look back on it with undue elation. That is, unless we be very

foolish indeed. And it may be that we shall have to look back on it with sorrowful self-condemnation: wondering to find in ourselves what that hour brings to light. We shall not willingly go where we shall be subjected to such a strain. Yet remember, in great humility, that Provocation can bring nothing out of you but what was in you: though latent there. And do not be hard on poor souls,—poor souls whether among the highest or the humblest,—who have been subjected to provocations you never knew; and who fired-up and burst out very wildly under them. We know, in ourselves, what far less might have made of us. And we, never so tried, need not be self-satisfied. No: but very thankful: and very humble.

VI

MODEST EXPECTATION AT
WHITSUNTIDE

VI

*MODEST EXPECTATION AT WHITSUNTIDE*¹

‘As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain.’—EZEKIEL i. 28.

THIS is the text which has come to me for this Pentecost, day of rejoicing : this day on which the Blessed Comforter came. Many times, very many, have I spoken upon this day to the Christian congregation : Of course there can be but one subject, in this hour. Yet there need be no sameness : there is wide diversity and variety in the story, and in the message, of Whitsun-Day.

For we live, we Christian people who are ‘waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,’ under the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit : This is His Day. From that first Pentecost on till the hour when Christ shall come again, the Church, and all Her members, are under the special charge,

¹ Parish church, St. Andrews : May 13, 1894, Whitsun-Day.

enlightenment, guidance, consolation, and tutelage from hour to hour, of the Third Person in the awful Trinity. How we take things, every little thing that comes to us: How we are affected, educated, formed by all that array of small experiences which makes our little life: How we are helped through work: calmed under the fretting wear that never leaves us: kept from breaking-down and dying under the crushing blow: all these, and facts in our history beyond numbering, on which one could write a volume or preach every Sunday for a year: are some little part in the story of the dealings with our individual souls, lonely, lonely in such pathetic details known to no one but ourselves, of the Blessed and Holy Spirit Which is God: Whom Christ promised to send after He went to brethren else left comfortless, left orphans: and whom He did send upon this selfsame day.

The truth is: Every word a preacher can say, really speaking to the real experience of any Christian man or woman,—sinful, saved, sanctified some little: nay more, every sentence an essayist could write for the guidance and cheer of unknown friends: ay, the talk of blossoming trees in their glory and fragrance, and of the hopeful lustre of the woods of the early Summer: all these, if in any

measure done worthily, truthfully, and earnestly as by one solemnly responsible, are a setting-forth of little details in the infinitely-diversified dealing with immortal souls of this great Enlightener, Quickener, Educator, Consoler, Prompter of heart-communion with God.

And all these, time by time, with the voice and on the printed page, I have tried, by His own help, to set forth to tried souls. But to-night I am turning from them all, to a new track of thought never beaten before ; and sketched out by this text which has come to me.

Indeed the text gave it me : pointed me to it : said what my short message to-night had to be. And in such a case, many preachers have found that it was the message which some soul needed, just then.

I think this text suggests what may save some tried soul from a dull, blank disappointment. Even of the Almighty Spirit of God we are not to expect too much.

You know what-like is ' the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain.' Wonderfully beautiful and bright : a gleam of glory amid the dark clouds : but the dark clouds are there. The rainbow does not dispel them : it

promises that in God's time they shall go: and already it is a little expanse of brightness and hopefulness amid the deep gloom. When the windows of heaven were opened in days after the Deluge, and the drenching rains came down, the gray fathers of the early world might have trembled, but that the mild arch of promise was there, saying that the Flood should not return again. There was God's pledge, that not such should be the end of this world. And going beyond that first assurance of the type that never 'grows pale with age,' there is that in the bow which God has set in the cloud which suggests faith and hope in the darkest days that come upon our homes, our Church, our Race.

It seems a good text for Pentecost: day of rejoicing: day when the Comforter came: day when of old the churches, over Christendom, were thronged by multitudes clad in white array, the garb of thankful joy. For it was *White-Sunday* then. That gleam of beautiful and joyful light and colour in the dark horizon, is suggestive on a day like this: suggests something which is true to the experience of most Christian people.

He is a mighty Comforter Who came down on that first Day of Pentecost; and Who has never

gone away. He is a Divine Comforter : He is God Almighty. He can do anything. He could utterly dispel all clouds and rain ; and make blazing sunshine of our lot. Just a word from Him : and even here there might be 'no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain.' We need 'strong consolation,' doubtless : but never any that is beyond *His* strength. It would be easy for Him to make an end of the pathetic Need-Be of St. Barnabas, that 'we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God' : easy for Him to sweep away for ever and a day that older heritage of poor mortality, that 'man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward'—meaning as sure as that. Ay : but He has not done it. His light,—it is there,—but it gleams through the gloom and does not dispel it : His cheer is a reality,—but it just keeps the bleeding heart from breaking,—and that is all. Yes : the almighty Comforter is here in this Church and world of never-ending sorrow and trouble, only 'as the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain.' The Comforter has come to the heart : but the face is lined and worn ; and the eyes look at you wistfully, and through tears. The green leaves are bright, as they used to be, and the blossoms are beautiful

and fragrant as in a May thirty years since : but though doubtless the Comforter could give back all the old vernal buoyancy, yet of a truth He hath not done so. The graves are too many for that : the scars of bereavement and loss and disappointment are too deep. And the weary struggler can barely struggle through.

There is that in your lot : that in your memory of the way you have come : which the Blessed Comforter will just help you to live through, and no more. Sometimes barely *that*. But you know that without Him, there come hours in which you would break down and die.

It is our way to say (and doubtless it is in some sense true), that it would not be good for us, here, that the great Comforter should do His work fully : that it is better that all the cheer and brightness He brings into our dwellings should be but a faint glimmering and specimen of what He could do were He not hampered. You understand what I mean : there is only one way in which we can talk of God Almighty being hampered. It is when He is hindered of going straight to what we know to be His end, by considerations of the nature and circumstances of the beings He is working on : and of what is for their true good. Take, for

example, the bringing all nations into the Church of Christ. Does God need our poor struggling Missions: the perpetual beating-up for money: the song that is made when this lad and that in some Divinity Hall gives his life-work to the heathen world: the pressure of petty and disenchanting worries and shifts which come like a splash of cold water upon hearts lifted up by the jubilant singing of some beautiful missionary hymn? Does God need all these humbling disenchantments, when one word, one stretching-forth of the almighty Hand, could make all mankind Christian to-morrow? Ah, but that is not His way of doing what yet He desires to be done: He uses our poor weak agencies: and some day it will be made manifest that His way is the right way.

Even so with the Divine Comforter and His work. Christ promised to send Him. Christ did send Him on Pentecost. And yet what a life of trouble they had to live to whom the Comforter came! You remember St. Paul's catalogue of the perils and sorrows an Apostle had to go through. It must be even so with us; not worthy to be named with such as these. Not, for us, the evenly joyous lot: not, for us, the quiet heart. Trouble has to come: the sharp stroke, the enduring fret-

ting care. And we must just abide them. The Blessed Comforter keeps us up : keeps us somehow going on. In the darkness there comes a little light : and a promise of more. It is like the rainbow on the lowering horizon. The Comforter does not send away the trouble : He only helps us to live through it. He comes, 'as the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain.'

Ah, there are those who know the unutterable pathos of the story of the terrible privations, bereavements, temptations,—bewildering, stunning,—which Christ's best children have been enabled to endure : barely to endure ! I never forgot how one said to me, long ago,—quietly said, ' It's a wonder I am living at all ! ' God knows it was. It is a homely sentence : you hear it continually : but there is real tragedy in it : *What they Came Through.*

One might say on this day of Pentecost, if we did not know something very different,—Surely Christ's people should never know anxiety or sorrow : their faces should always be bright. A Comforter is promised them Who can do anything. He is able to cheer. He comes to cheer. How can they be careworn ? They tell us that under more sunshiny skies even our anxious race is less

burdened than here. But He should bring the sunshine of the heart, on the wintriest day.—It is not Christ's way. 'Anxious I have lived,' was the testimony of one of Christ's good children, drawing to the close. It is a grand counsel, the 'Be careful for nothing': but it is a counsel of perfection. Not even he who gave it to us could always carry it out here. Dare we say, that in that night's unutterable agony in Gethsemane, not Christ Himself could quite 'take no thought for the morrow,' and what it was to bring?

I am not going, now, to speak of want of faith in ourselves, want of submission, want of perpetual crying to the Divine Comforter: though all these wants are there. But of homely facts we all know. Some great heavy abiding trouble: Can I forget how one, long at rest, spoke to me of 'a living sorrow'? that good Christian soul. Some pain to bear in body, some darkness in mind: something in the domestic life, something as concerns the little means which buy the precious 'necessaries of life': You may pray with little ceasing that the great Comforter would quite deliver you from these. But the answer may be, No. The Comforter will not help you to that degree. Go on, go on, like St. Paul under his humbling thorn

in the flesh : year after year. You will just be kept up enough to keep you from breaking down and dying : but no more.—You may say this is poor comfort : ah, what might you have come to without it ? You remember the awful alternative named long ago by Job's wife. You remember, what is far better to remember, the patient patriarch's 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' Yes : the Comforter was working on that torn heart, on that black day.

And sometimes, though you be Christ's good child, and though you have earnestly prayed for the Comforter, this may be all He will do for you.

Do not make sure of more. More may be given, far more. But go to your closet, and fall on your knees, and thank God for even this.

Tried Christian people, grown wearied in the greatness of the way, is not this enough ? Does any one say I am telling you a discouraging story on this day of good-cheer ?

Nay verily. I could not truly tell you more. If I said, Come to Jesus, Ask for the indwelling of the Blessed Comforter : and then you will be happy ever after ;—you will live a cheerful joyous life, all troubles swept away : you would know *that* was not true to your own experience. But if

we are assured of all the comfort we need, to bear us safely through this world of trouble to the world where trouble is unknown:—and if we get never any too much, but never too little to live by; shall we not be humbly content? Will not that make Christ's promise true, 'I will not leave you comfortless'? Surely He has not. Oftentimes we thought we should be beaten. But we never have quite been. He has not left us comfortless!

There are bright times in life, when things go cheerily. We do not need to be comforted then. We do not need to be lifted up when we have never been cast down, and brought low. God bless you who are living in sunshine: Long may it last.

But I look on to the day, sure to come, when the cloud of trouble will arise from some quite-unexpected quarter: when some one to whom you are somehow bound may prove a ceaseless anxiety: when some burden, for long lightly-borne, may turn heavier than you can bear.

I look on to the day, sure to come, when your home will be dark: when the old familiar face will be changed; and you must bury your dead from your sight. That day may delay long: but it has got to be.

And oh, thank God, if in such dark times, the

Blessed and Holy Spirit of God, the good and kind Comforter, be in your home, in your heart, and to all you care for, just Light enough to live by : Light enough whereby to hope on : even 'as the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain.'

VII
CONSUMMATION

VII

*CONSUMMATION*¹

‘ And he shall go no more out.’—REV. iii. 12.

WE all of us often read little passages of Holy Scripture, not taking in their force. Then, some day, perhaps, a ray of light seems to fall upon the words ; and of a sudden we discern a deep meaning in them.

It has proved so, with some reader here and there, as to this brief text.

I know that to some, this is a specially significant and precious promise. It conveys a great deal. Let us look at it, and think it out. Let no one say it is not much for a text. I tell you it is a grand one : if I am enabled to set it out rightly to you.

You know how it comes in. You have heard the chapter read. You know Who speaks : It is

¹ Preached in the Chapel, Farnham Castle, Sunday, June 11, 1893.

Christ Himself: speaking to the angel of the church in Philadelphia.

‘Him that overcometh’: him that fights, and conquers, temptation, danger, trouble, sin: ‘will I make a pillar in the temple of my God’: give him a high place, for usefulness and beauty, in the glorified Church: ‘And he shall go no more out.’ He shall not lose his place. He shall keep it, evermore.

It is a great promise.

We have to *go out*. It is the condition of our being here. We come into church: we come to the holy table: and by God’s grace, we are delivered from the cares outside: from the heavy, anxious heart. We are delivered from sin and temptation outside: the power of evil is weakened in us: we are better and happier people than we have been for long: we say to ourselves ‘It is good for us to be here.’ But, in a little, we must *go out*: we go down from the mount of ordinances, from the mount of Communion. The peace fades away: the love waxes cold: the cares and anxious thoughts come around us again. You would not think that we had been with Jesus. Old temptations and follies assert their power, as before. The Best is a short blink here. That is the rule.

The time of blossoms is brief; and the time of roses. The blazing summer-days are few. Under a miraculous sunset you have seen hills and waters glorify into a splendour which they wear only on two or three evenings in the long year. The longest season is the Winter. Cold and darkness last.

In our anxious and weary lives, we have had a glimpse of peace sometimes. It is as when a little vessel has got into a sheltered cove, safe from waves and winds. We have got away from our troubles. And we are thankful, here, for a little thing. But we know, all the while, that we must soon put out to sea again: put out upon that 'sea of troubles,' which is the 'sea of life.' The anxious faces we see: we know their meaning well. And when human beings, after many a sore struggle, after much weaning from the vain hopes and ambitions of early days through mortifying failure, after many a painful lesson, think they have in a measure got out of the wood, got clear of care for themselves, then cares for their children come, which will last for life. Now, *There*; never to go out of the blessed peace and quiet. To abide always at our best, and peacefullest. It is an unspeakable thing! Yet that is the meaning of

Christ's promise : and surely it is made to us, as well as to overdriven Christian souls in Asia long ago : ' I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God : and he shall go no more out.'

The great idea is that in that Better Life, those who are allowed to enter in *will never lose what they have gained.*

You know the way of this world. Though you have got a thing, you are not safe to keep it : here. Let us begin with what everybody can understand. Take a language, a science. By long work, you have mastered it. But you forget it all, unless you work on to keep it up. Once, you could express yourself easily and clearly in a foreign tongue : but after years of disuse, you have grown rusty : the words will not come to you when they are wanted. Take a faculty : a power. *That* decays, if it be not kept always bright, by continual use of it. A great preacher, whose custom was to address a multitude in unwritten speech with unflinching fluency, and that habitually, was wont to say that if he left off preaching for just six Sundays, he could never begin again. The power would go. And apart from that, which to some may seem fanciful to say, every one knows *that* power must go by time. It is not very long a preacher is at

his best. The heart grows cooler: the voice weaker: the nerve fails. And then people say he has 'gone off': you would never think, to hear him now, what he was twenty years since.

As for worldly wealth and position, it is a commonplace, though not the less a touching one, how often poor human beings have to *go out* from these. It reaches most hearts, when the greatest Scotsman wrote in his diary what he felt in going out from the home of all his most prosperous years. At a humbler level, it comes home to some when the poor widow and children must go out from the quiet manse, to face the world unhelped as of old, with breaking hearts. And I can never forget how one, endowed with unlimited wealth, and possessing all this world can give, spoke to me long ago about going out from his beautiful home into the blank mystery (as it seemed to him) of another world.

These ways of losing what people had are serious enough: it is a vain thing to pretend anything other. But there are far more serious thoughts: musing on this world's sorrowful way of gaining valued possessions and then not being able to keep them. Though you gain a grace, it may go. It seemed you had gained it: the lowliness of true humility: the contentment which

comes of true resignation to your heavenly Father's will: a living faith in Christ's goodness, and His willingness to save, so that you thought you had of a surety laid hold of His great Atonement and were in a state of salvation. It seemed you had gained the spirit of prayer: you had attained a blessed elevation above worldly ambitions: you had won the great grace of patience,—you were delivered from that humbling irritability which was natural to you: you had not merely a kind word for everybody, but indeed a kind heart. Ah, brethren: all may go. And there is no comfort at all in being told that this means you never were right at all: that there was some flaw in all that seemed good in you: that you were deceiving yourself: that it was all natural feeling and never the genuine grace of God. You remember how one of the most outstanding of human beings, drawing near to death, had many fears. He sent for his religious advisers, and asked them, with a terrible earnestness, Whether it was possible for the elect to fall, and finally perish: and being assured *that* was impossible, he said, Then I am safe: for I am certain I was once in a state of grace. I want to cherish a wide hope in God's great mercy to us poor souls that never had much chance of being

better than we are. But oh, *that* comfort was delusion! And poor Oliver Cromwell—ay poor man, pity him,—and he went at fifty-nine—had better far been told to turn to Jesus at the very last; and to put away all vain trust in past experiences which were so belied by the miserable but unmistakeable Present! If he ever had been within the pale of salvation, his own pausing heart told him he had *gone out* from that. And the doctrine of what theologians call the *Perseverance of the Saints* is anything but a comforting one to a professed Christian who knows he has backslidden and fallen away sorely. It does not mean that you may say to yourself, I feel as if I were wrong now; but I feel I once was right, and so I cannot be wrong now. No: it means only this: I feel I am wrong now, and therefore I never was right at all. When I thought myself at my best, I was under delusion.

I tell you, it is an awful doctrine, unless you are keeping your armour bright. It is an awful doctrine, if you know you are losing ground.

But without entangling ourselves in what may be called the transcendental metaphysics of our holy religion (though that doctrine I have stated is certainly taught in its extremest form in the

standards of the Kirk, and even in the milder articles of the Church of England) it may well suffice, in the light of our manifest discernment of the actual truth of things, to say how unutterably sad it is, to discern either in another or in one's self, such spiritual declension as one has seen : seen too often. You have seen the bitter cynical spirit, in the last years, of one who had glowed with zeal, and love to God and man, in his youth. Circumstances made me well acquainted with the story of the minister of a beautiful country parish, who for long lived and worked at an elevation of piety, sincere piety, which seemed even too much for the reserved and reticent Christians among whom his charge lay : they looked up to him, with awe, as to one admitted to an inner sanctuary that was beyond the comprehension even of ordinary saints : he burned with the desire for the salvation of those around him,—and yet all this without extravagance. People said, Oh, if all ministers were as earnest, as devoted, what times of refreshing and revival there would be ! But those warm days of fervour passed away. He gave up his charge : he emigrated to a distant land : he seemed to cease wholly from all Christian belief, certainly from all outward religious observances : and one

heard of him, after long years, as a man who had accumulated a great fortune by the very keenest and most remorseless rigour of business; never shewing sympathy or feeling for any mortal: not recognizable for the same human being who had been the unworldly evangelist of a generation before. Ah, so sadly changed! If he had been within the sanctuary,—and if he was not there, whom could you believe in,—he seemed ‘a pillar’: he had heartbreakingly ‘gone out.’

Now, in the New Jerusalem, in the city which has no special temple because it is all temple, such sorrowful falling-off can never be. For Christ Himself certifies us concerning him who is once ‘made a pillar’ in that temple, that ‘he shall go no more out.’

There, if Christ of His great mercy bring you there, whatever good you have once learnt to do, you will always be able to do. What grace of devotion, and elevation in goodness, you gain, you will always keep. There is just the one kind of human being that enters where he would wish to be and never goes out: it is he who enters Heaven. All he gains, he keeps. It is never lost. It all abides with him. If it change at all, it is for the better. If he move at all, it is onward and upward.

Perhaps these last words are too loftily expressed. You and I, who have travelled far, have got beyond what may be called spiritual ambition. What we want is rest ;—is safety. Even for the concerns of this world, we are well content to be ranked with ' Nature's unambitious underwood, and flowers that prosper in the shade.' Yet more, looking on to the Better Country, the lowliest place, at the Blessed Redeemer's feet, is far too good for us. I know the real feeling in the heart of over-driven anxious Christian folk, living and dying. Give us pardon, peace, and safety ; with the assurance that these shall not be lost ;—that there come no more weary stumblings and fallings, humbling repentances and imperfect recoveries and amendments. And that is Christ's promise in my text to-day.

I cannot but express the very keen disapproval which I believe most Christian people of any real experience, and any sense of the awful seriousness of our life, here and wherever we must go ; are sure to feel towards anything like fanciful speculation concerning the life which is yet unseen. What Christ has told us, is all we know : and forasmuch as He has told us but little, far less than we could wish, all the more we must cleave to what He has revealed. This is not the place for ingenious men,

who in fact think the other world is as yet far away from them, to use their ingenuity to the end, besides that of showing themselves off, of taking away from us any certainty or comfort we have got. I remember well, it is long ago, I was a youth in my first parish, the shock of something like horror with which I heard a very great preacher who was a very middling theologian gratuitously raise the question whether the glorified souls in Paradise might not sin and fall; and presumptuously declare that they might. That is nowhere taught in the New Testament; and my text teaches just the opposite. That unwise preacher thought to startle his congregation if not comfort them by teaching that he whom Christ has made a pillar in the temple of God may yet have to go out: which means that a saved soul is in truth not saved: which means that in the Better World you would not be safe at all; and that after the waves and storms of this uncertain world you reach no haven of final rest. It is a most awful doctrine! Oh, to think of the weary round all over again: blundering, stumbling, sinning, repenting afresh: never reaching any peace which could be trusted to abide: for I fear, I fear, if it be possible for poor man to go wrong, he will; and no prospect of any-

thing better than this through all eternity! One's whole soul rose against the suggestion. I said out my mind that day; and it never has changed. Wherefore, I am specially thankful for my text of this day. But we need not to build upon what some deem only a strong figure. You remember, 'So shall we ever be with the Lord': 'The righteous into life eternal': 'I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' But I do not found on separate sentences of God's last revelation to man: but upon the whole strain: there is not one discordant note. Of course, if any man tells us he does not believe the New Testament, we know where we have him. But it is hateful to find a preacher of salvation through Christ dealing with the poor anxious hearer, seeking rest, seeking assurance, with this levity, this heartlessness. A heaven from which saved souls are liable to be sent out, would be no heaven. And such souls would not be saved. For they would not be SAFE. They would be in continual danger: ay, the worst danger of all.

We cannot say it is well with us, till it is well for ever. We cannot say we have been set finally and perfectly right, till we are set where we can go wrong no more.

And now, finally, I ask you to think how my text gives assurance of deliverance from a great trouble: a trouble which with many eats out the enjoyment of this life. It means deliverance from Fears: from anxious Fears.

‘Here in fear’: how common that experience! It was one of the best and wisest men I ever knew, who once said to me, ‘The changes that are sure to come, I fear to see.’ You know the fine hymn says just the contrary. But if you are a reasonable being, looking reasonably at your circumstances, and at what here seems quite sure to come to you, you cannot but often feel anxious. Many hard-working people know that they cannot much longer be equal to their work. There is the unspeakable pathos of the latter days. There is the breaking-down of strength and heart: the beloved work dropt from the failing hand: what it will be to *Go*. And sometimes we think it does not look like *Going Away*. It looks like *Going Out*. Certainly all our worldly possessions we valued must, as was simply said long ago, ‘*Go out* with this life.’ When we are carried out the threshold, it is certain we shall not return that way any more. And, of course, some day,—we had better not know the day when it comes,—each of

us who have often worshipped here, and grown fond of the beautiful historic sanctuary, will go out of it for the last time. Every thing we have here will go from us, or we from it. 'We brought nothing into this world; and it is certain we can carry nothing out.'

Oh let no mortal say such things unless feeling them through and through: unless feeling that he *has to say them!*

Brethren, one greatest blessing of the Better Country must needs be to be set free from fears for the future. You know how hard the New Testament tries to deliver us from fears even in this present world: in many ways seeking to 'have you without carefulness': pressing the counsel, 'Be careful for nothing': not, confess it, with much success: for you know many 'pass the time of their sojourning here in fear,' in a sense the Apostle did not mean. But that tremour of vague alarm so familiar in many breasts, cannot be above. And the text says Why. It is because nothing can go wrong. No adverse event can befall. No one can ever break in, bearing crushing bad news. You will never be vexed by the wrong-doing and trouble of others: though here is a great mystery, I confess. We understand not at all how saved souls shall think of those not there: of what they

are doing and (God knows) suffering. In this life even, many know what that was : Far more if in another, with the great gulf between. Here is a secret thing, which must be left to God, All-Wise, All-Merciful. Only be sure of this : that in a state where no sad change for the worse can come, there can be nothing we shall fear to see. The old trembling apprehension of coming evil must be finally excluded ; done with for evermore. Does any man or woman of any experience fail to know with what feeling the day's news has often been waited for ? Often with an anxious mind : sometimes with a sinking heart.

I cannot conceive states of being more vitally and unutterably divided, than the state in which the awful Future is of necessity contemplated with such fear that men would not name it : the languages of Northern Europe have not a word that conveys the bare idea of Futurity, and of what we are to do in it : and the better state in which it is impossible that the Future should bring any evil, and in which it is therefore impossible that the Future should be regarded with fear. The distance from here to Sirius is nothing to that ! The saved soul, departing from this troublesome, anxious being passes into peace, into holiness, into safety, into

assurance : and it can 'go no more out !' There is a final end of fears.

The grand meaning of that promise in my text is Stability : It is Assurance of Safety and Peace. And how we prize any blink of such a thing here ! How we miss it ; knowing we have it not ! Just think how thankful we are when the most prosperous seasons in our life are well over. Because we knew they might not have gone well. There might have been a sad breakdown and disappointment. We would not face those happy days again. I remember well how a man who for many weeks had discharged a most conspicuous duty with eminent success gave me just a glimpse of the anxiety of his heart all through,—which nobody would have guessed, looking at him,—by saying ' How thankful I am it is well over ! I made perfectly sure that such a thing' (which he named) ' would happen to me, and spoil everything.' Many a one had looked at the dignified aspect of that eminent person, little thinking what fears were in his heart.

We have no assurance of a successful ending here. It may be all for our true good that we should break down. But it would be very painful. For any earnest worker to be disabled and laid aside for even a few weeks is a very great trial.

‘ Nevertheless afterward,’—you know the Apostle’s words. But ‘ No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.’ And what is indeed a spiritual blessing, in the long run, may come in such a shape, that the poor sufferer can but write against it *An Awful Thing : A Knock-down Blow*.

We want, my Christian friends, humbly to accept all God sends, as Right : as in some sense the Best, that though we cannot see it now. I know the moan that is wrung from a great sufferer’s heart : I never forget how a Christian man, if ever there was one, burst out when another and another and another killing blow had fallen, and I was doing my poor best to say a word of comfort,— ‘ Now don’t tell me that God is good, because He’s not.’ ‘ Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him ’ ; was all the most patient of men could come to. And while we pray, and agonise, to take all God sends resignedly ; *that* does not mean but what we are thankful, more than words can say, that there is a Future Life in which much He sends now will be absent. We bow to all Evil here : somehow it must needs be : But we bless God for the mention of that Golden City where there is ‘ no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying ; neither shall there be any more pain.’

Though all God's ways here are right, we shall be very thankful to escape from many of them. And my text tells that in His time we shall. 'The former things' are to 'pass away.' Let us take the grand truth of my text, and hold by it; through trying days. Ah, 'Go no more out.' There is but the one place where that can be. *There*, where the glorified Church shall be at rest; and those once strangers and pilgrims shall be *At Home*.

You may, perhaps, in that higher life, range over the wide creation; and come to know many a marvel of God's Handiwork, undreamt of now. But all that wide wandering means no departure from the Father's house. Though you fathom limitless space, and know its infinitude; still, in deep truth, it shall be said of such as you, 'Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out.'

These things are well. But yet, as I draw to a close, I go back thankfully to the homely truth which I know is so welcome to many hearts: The End of Fears. That, after all, is the essential blessing promised in these words so often repeated. And going out from this brief worship, we cast our anchor here. Here is what all can understand:

pilgrims who have little heart for the sublime, or the far away. And it is touching how Art, which had no special call to think minutely of the New Testament, has anticipated my text; and set it out with a pathos no preacher can. It was a blazing summer evening when I first saw them, the three colossal faces, sculptured by some great genius, which look from a noble sepulchre over a princely domain: and which are meant to represent Life, Death, and Immortality. It was easy to represent Death: the face was one of solemn rest, with closed eyes: and the sculptor's skill was mainly shewn in distinguishing Life from Immortality. He had done it well. *There* was Life: a careworn, anxious, weary face, that seemed to look at you wistfully, and with a vague enquiry for something—the something that is lacking in all things here. And *There* was Immortality: life-like, but oh! how different from mortal Life! *There* was the beautiful face; calm, satisfied, self-possessed, sublime; and with eyes looking far away. Aye, there was perfect peace, perfect safety. There was the look of the pilgrim who has entered Christ's own holy dwelling; and who need go out nevermore.

VIII

KNOWN IN ADVERSITIES

VIII

*KNOWN IN ADVERSITIES*¹

‘Thou hast known my soul in adversities.’—PSALM *xxi.* 7.

NOBODY ever knew any man long without knowing him in adversities. They are sure to come. Perhaps the word is too serious and dignified for the occasion. We know that the awful stroke of bereavement has fallen on the house and will fall again: and no word is too grave to express that. We know people who have had to bear agonising bodily pain, and to pass through some sharp trial out of which it was just as likely they might never come at all: and you can hardly speak of that in too serious phrase: neither will you be inclined to belittle it if you have experienced the like yourself. I do not desire to fully revive in any memory here the great sorrows of past life: God be thanked, they

¹ Parish Church, St. Andrews, May 6, 1894. At the celebration of the Holy Communion.

are transitory things: 'and though they leave us not the men we were, yet they do leave us.' Nor do they come,—come to most of us,—so very often, after all.

But there are adverse circumstances, little events which take us adversely, which we do not like, which come to us without our own will or against it,—though somewhat short of the serious *adversities* of my text,—in our life very nearly every day. We speak of Worry almost with a smile: in some recent literature we have heard so much of it. But talking of it, whether gravely or playfully, will not exorcise it: It is always there. One was a boy then: but I see yet a kind good face, the face of one trying to make light of what was in truth heavy: I hear the voice saying 'I'm in a peck of troubles to-day.' It was a very gentle way of expressing the fact. Even young folk have known the strange blankness of disappointment, and its dull ache. And there are homes, very many, where anxious thoughts of the absent members can never be very long or very far away. Other dwellings, where the fretting vexation, corroding inwardly, and never quite forgotten, makes an end of the quiet heart. The light heart is not looked for.

Enough of this : it may soon turn to a morbid line of thought. So I go on to say that though we know a friend is in trouble,—ay in what my text calls adversities,—little, little indeed, do we understand him there. I know you have each of you wondered, looking at a man's cheery face, listening to his cheery voice, and then thinking of circumstances in his lot,—wondered how he bore up: how he lived at all. 'Surely they cannot feel things as we should : ' is the rough conclusion with which some explain this. Others, more wisely, remember how much is felt by human beings which is not expressed. They never tell. There is many a person we continually see, while yet we know him most imperfectly : and he does not choose that we should know more. There is a self-respect, worthy of all approval, which would have fellow-mortals keep their distance. There is a decent reserve, towards the dearest friends.

You read, in the biography, just out, of a great man gone, that from two, very specially beloved, 'he had no secrets.' His friends were very many. Such confidants were but two.

Now, in sober reality, with nothing highflown, it is a true comfort to many tried Christian souls, that their Saviour knows them through and

through. Of course, He must see very much that is weak : that is unworthy : that you would shrink from any one else knowing : *That* has to be. But it is not that side of the truth which we now look at. It is rather the comfort of being understood. Amid the much that is amiss within you, you have often thought that if you were better understood, you would be more patiently borne with. We get angry with a poor creature whom we ought to be sorry for. We think a thing silly which we ought to think pathetic. Often, often, has a sufferer said to each of us, ' Nobody knows what I am bearing ' : ' I never can express what I have come through. ' Yes, and more than that. The strange mental idiosyncrasy which has been inherited from those who went before : the twist, intellectual or moral, which doubles the weight of every duty : which in itself is a sore temptation to deviate to right or left. I have beheld a terrible meaning in the eye which could never be expressed by the lips : no more than the meaning in the eye of a suffering dog or horse can find expression. I stood, just to-day, beside one dying : a young creature, in the awful exhaustion and restlessness of the approaching end,—the sight of which makes one wish that we were less tenacious of life, that

we could be more easily delivered from it,—a young creature much needed here : there were unspoken burdens on that failing heart : and one thought, then and there, *She* could not tell what she was passing through,* what she was feeling : No, she could not, though she had been the most eloquent of the race. She could but look, piteously, intently, on those who stood by : and oh, how little they knew of the solemn experience that was being lived through before them ! God be thanked, there was One who knew it all. God be thanked for the comfort of that text, of gloomy sound till we take in its true force, ‘Thou hast known my soul in adversities.’

For, in all extremity, we have a terrible craving to be felt for : which means to be understood.

Now my text reminds us there is One Who understands us. And we can go farther than the Psalmist could. We have seen the infinite God brought near, and made understandable, when the Blessed Redeemer was made Man : the Psalmist never saw that. We are able to look up to God Almighty in some at least of our worst suffering, and think He has felt the same : the Psalmist never could do that. The Man of sorrows knows our soul in adversities as God the Creator could

not. *He* must needs look down upon us from high above. Jesus Christ, a Brother Man, sets himself by our side : ay, can dwell within us.

One thinks, continually, in these perplexing days, when it is just impossible for us to keep the simplicity of our fathers, because we have learned so much more, and have had so many difficulties suggested to us of which they had not an idea, that the great prayer which remains to us is *Increase our faith*. I do not for a moment mean that we are to ask to be enabled to believe what we see is not true (which is what some mean by faith) : *That* cannot be : and if it is made unanswerably plain to your intellect that a thing is not true, *that* is God's most direct revelation to you that the thing is not true. But I mean, now, faith to make real to us what we intelligently believe, but do not in fact grasp and realise : as this truth of Christ's knowledge of us. After writing that sentence I turned up three of the best commentaries on the Book of Psalms, to see what they said of this verse. I tell you, frankly, I saw in a moment that the devout writers had just set down the kind of traditional thing to say, all very sound and sensible ; without in any measure taking in what the words they used, *meant*. We want to feel, in our distress, that

there, beside us though unseen by us, is that Kindest and Best really looking upon us: I will say, outspokenly, that I think we, stript Kirk-folk, forswearing art, lose sadly by not having the Face and Form continually set before us, in our homes, in our churches: Few indeed can realise what Christ is like when they talk of keeping near Him, when they pray *Abide with us*: they understand not what they say. And the result is, that when some Christian soul, living at a higher level of devotion than ourselves, speaks as reality of feeling Christ's presence, we are ready to think there is something morbid: I have heard it said, by a wonderfully clever man, 'I felt frightened when I heard him talk.' And yet, he had said nothing but what St. Paul or St. John would have said as a matter of course. Ah, there is a deep unbelief, far deeper than anything merely intellectual, which we have all to fight against in these materialistic days.

What we believe, realise it or not, is that we, in lowly measure Christ's children, may hope, when troubles lesser or greater come to us, that the great Redeemer, Who, being God, is absolutely untrammelled by difficulty arising from the countless things He has to think of, is really looking

upon us and considering our state, all the little details of it : not indeed taking trouble away, for good reason He knows and we do not : but marking our heart and head, all we feel and think. Dear friend, you are not of much consequence in this world : Do you really think Christ troubles Himself to think in this way about you? Yes you do : and there is no presumption in it : you recall the inspired words, 'I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me.'

He knows how we stood it, all that dark time. How we came through it. What like we came out of it. Whether we tried hard to trust, when sense saw little reason : 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,' as Job said. Whether we broke down and gave everything up and grew bitter and sore of heart. Were we full of envy and hatred, in the days of disappointment : or did we sit down humbly in dust and ashes : 'The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken : Blessed be the Name of the Lord'? They saw, those about you, that you were under heavy pressure : How heavy, none knew. There are experiences which words cannot express. And if they could, they would not be spoken. But when you got apart from any, in that time : entered into your closet and were alone with Him

that seeth in secret : though you could say little, say nothing, even to Him ; you had learnt better than you fancied. That dumb setting yourself in God's presence, without a word : what did it mean but that at least you were cleaving to the Psalmist's old assurance that there is One Who knows His creatures through and through ? And indeed it was no mean attainment when the mute figure, on its knees, silently said to Christ, 'Thou hast known my soul in adversities' !

Have a place to go to, some quiet corner, when things are at the worst : and how bad they may be, God only knows. Only this : some day, for yourself, or for another, your heart will have all it can bear. Has it not been so already ? Ah, born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward : as sure as that, or as the law of gravitation. Most of us feel the simple pathos of Goldsmith's line,

' In all my griefs,—and God has given my share.'

But I am afraid of getting to what may seem unreal : and so pass to the next thought. It is this : that the solemn words 'Thou hast known my soul in adversities,' suggest, that it is in the day of trouble, under that pressure, that our real nature comes out. Even people around us know

us in adversities as they do not in the sunshine : discover what we really are. We are all very pleasant and amiable when everything goes well with us. I knew one, gone away, who had a very sensitive nature : and who, on a morning when it seemed that it was to get the upper hand, would say, 'Now, everything must be made smooth for me to-day.' Of course, you know, an immense deal may be done, by consideration and sympathy on the part of those around, to make things smooth : just as a great deal may be done by coarseness of soul, and selfishness (I will not even name intentional malignity), to make some poor creature's burden heavier and the provocations more than can be endured. But you know, too, that though when we come to be tried, it is often because of want of thought and want of heart in those with whom we have to come in contact, yet the greatest troubles which come are oftentimes through no human intervention : they come through God's unimpeached decree, and direct through the working of His Providence. Days come, which no human being can make smooth : not for the most shrinkingly sensitive ; not for the very dearest. Pass from that, however ; and think just of this : What a test of us trouble is : both

lesser trouble and greater : and whether it seems to come from God's hand or from man's. It sometimes reveals us to ourselves in a startling way. Ah, what a burst of impatience, of bitterness, of something very like envy and spite, has come of a disappointment : of missing something we had worked for : of being set lower than we think we deserved ! I dare say Job did not think it was in that poor woman to utter the awful 'Curse God and die,' till utter distraction and despair forced it from her. Let us trust, a transient madness, soon to be repented of in dust. And though humbly hoping that ourselves, and all we care for, have *come to ourselves* when we are at our best and not at our worst : still, the worst must have been in us, latent, or no pressure of adversity could have brought it out. Thus, in an awful truth, our souls, what is in them, are known in adversities, as never in sunshiny weather. You do not know how weak are an old tree's roots, till the heavy blast gets at it : and then the tree that looked so firmly fixed, goes down. The blast did not make the fatal weakness. It only revealed the fatal weakness, and made it known of all men.

But though it be most certain that many a Christian man or woman, looking back on some

trying time,—well said, *trying time*, for indeed it tries us, assays us, as silver is tried,—has been constrained to say,—‘ I was tested, sharply, in that time of disappointment, of provocation, of bereavement, of painful illness,—tested sharply, and I did not come well out of it : “ Thou hast known my soul in adversities,” and known me for something weaker, more fretful, more self-willed and self-conceited, than I had thought possible ’ : let us thank God that there is the other way too,—which seems to have been the way with him who wrote my text,—which assuredly was the way with the patient patriarch who, when tried as few have been, ‘ fell down upon the earth and worshipped ’ ; and said the sublime words which make the very high-water mark of heroic resignation : which have been taken for that grand burial-service which we know well here. Yes, he comes magnificently out of the crush of ‘ adversities,’ who can say from the heart, ‘ The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ And it was a supreme testimony when God Almighty, having known His servant’s soul through that awful assaying, could say ‘ None like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man.’ Ay, known in adversities ; tested to the very core of his being : and

even the searching Eye above could see nothing but good resultant.

And you are not to say that this was all well in him who stands out after these thousands of years still the proverbial First with no one second to him. God be thanked, we have all known quiet sufferers, whose names will never be printed, who did not fall so very far short of Job himself. I am obliged to say that in one's own experience that angelic endurance, that resignation which matched St. Paul himself, have always been among those who make suffering humanity's gentler and worthier part. Yet he came grandly out of that wherein he was tried, who attained to the unforgettable 'Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.' And that was attained by more than two or three I have known. Surely the Blessed Redeemer was satisfied, seeing in such of the travail of His soul : of the plain working of the great Comforter. He always 'knew what was in man': but when He came to know a poor soul in terrible adversities, and saw only lowly submission to the Will above, and the earnest prayer for patience to hold on, it was a pleasant sight for Him to see.

For though the 'Man of Sorrows' was

'acquainted with grief,' He had some acquaintance with joy too. Never forget His own words, preserved for us though we know not when He said them, that 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' So we are sure that when the widow of Nain received back her son from the unseen world, though the poor heart was full beyond words, it was not so happy as the Saviour's. He 'delivered him to his mother': the Blessed Redeemer gave, the poor human being received. We know Who had the better, in that hour. I said, *The Blessed Redeemer*: the words are music. But He was *More Blessed*: then!

That is, unless He was mistaken, when He said the never-forgotten words. Which cannot be.

A closing word. St. Andrew of Crete has been at rest for many hundred years. But he had learned to understand things. Perhaps he was thinking of my text when he ventured to put words on the lips of his Saviour:

Well I know thy trouble,
O My servant true:
Thou art very weary,—
I was weary too.

But that toil shall make thee
Some day all Mine own :
And the end of sorrow
Shall be near My throne.

I have, of set purpose, turned from my usual matters of discourse, on such a day. Always, through these many years, I have spoken, more or less directly, of the Blessed Sacrament itself: To-day, rather of what makes us need it so much, its help and its consolation. And the season speaks to us, too. As last Thursday was Christ's Ascension. He went away, though He never left us. And 'I will not leave you comfortless': you whom I have known in troubles and must know in more. We have followed Him from Birth to Death: to Rising Again: to this last going in visible form from earth: the 'going away,' which was to send us the Blessed Comforter. As next Sunday, His Coming: Pentecost, Day of joy. Of course, He came long ago and never has departed. But these things come round fresh, like the blossoms. And we feel them as new. We seem to be waiting again for the Coming of the Holy Ghost. And we have known Him in adversities: the great and good Comforter: the Inspirer of all worthy prayer: the Sanctifier who washes our hearts in innocency, so that we compass the Altar with righteousness and joy.

IX

THE CONDITION ALWAYS
UNDERSTOOD

IX

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‘ So soon as I shall see how it will go with me. ’—PHILIPPIANS ii. 23

ONE sometimes wonders how the human race can bear it. But the human race bears it: has always borne it; and must bear it while this world abides: this awful uncertainty in which we live: this blank ignorance of how it is to go with us. I sit down, after many thoughts, to begin this meditation on a text which came to me of a sudden in the blazing June weather, looking down from a terrace bounded by great roses, upon a little red town rising amid great hop-gardens, far away: a text which came as fit subject of my first words to you after long absence. But I take up the pen which fell from my hand five months since and more, like St. Paul, not in any way assured how things are to go. The pages may never be covered: the sermon may never be preached. Far from home: far, at least,

¹ St. Mary's, St. Andrews: Sunday, July 7, 1895.

from the place where my work has been for nearly thirty years. The thought presses in : Perhaps never again to stand in that pulpit so long familiar. Perhaps the work is over. Perhaps it may last for a little longer, yet. But, to each of us, the course to be pursued is plain. We must set our faces to what God has given us to do : asking the Holy Spirit's help, and looking for Christ's sympathy. The kind Face looks upon us, taking to the task : the all-merciful Heart feels for us ; that once dropt, from the eyes which were God Almighty's, those warm human tears.

And the Blessed Comforter, Inspirer, and Purifier, Who quickens the memory, touches the heart, and cheers the drooping spirit within us, is always near if we do but ask for Him. Right onward into the mystery, if He be within us : even though we see no more than the great Apostle did, of ' how it will go with us.'

Sometimes we are able to feel like that ; and then we break down. ' But I trust in the Lord,' are St. Paul's first words after he had dictated those which form my text. We pray that they may be ours.

Yet it is a pathetic thing, take it how you may, in the appointed lot of poor humanity, the blind

way in which we must go on. 'Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' We often forget it, though never for long. Something comes, and reminds us. We plan ahead, as though the future were sure. And quite fitly too. It is God's manifest intention. It would unnerve us, and unfit for our duty, to dwell continually on one side of the truth. Jehovah-Jireh : the Lord will provide. 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.' 'Be careful for nothing': you remember the grand text, with its magnificent counsel of superhuman perfection. So we try to hope : though sad things have come. And St. Paul varied in his mood, as we do. St. Paul was no better off than we. Often, he had the spirit of prophecy. He foresaw the coming history of the Church. Did he see it all? One wonders how he stood it, if he did : that awful record of sin and shame. But put that aside, to-day : his own coming life was not so revealed. And here we are at home with him. You read his words : and you say to yourself, Ah, how like me ! He would make up his mind what to do, he says, 'So soon as I shall see how it will go with me.'

He would see that when the event came. Not before. He must wait : as each of us has waited. And the more human beings you care for, the

greater room for anxious thought as to how things will go. It is not merely, like St. Paul, 'go with *me*.' It is, go with husband and wife; go with the boys and girls. And not merely how things will go in God's mysterious providence: but how things will go through the folly and the wrongdoing of many besides ourselves. Things might go, too, in such a way that there would be no heart to do anything. Such a blow might fall upon any as should break the spring of the spirit utterly. And our strength of body and mind is held by a frail and uncertain tenure. Some injury, coming very swift and unforeseen, of either our spiritual or our material nature: and our working-time is ended, here. Be sure, all these possibilities were in the Apostle's mind, when he dictated that solemn text. You come out of church on a Sunday as you have done times innumerable before: you never dream but next Sunday, and the next, you are to be there again as usual. You make many engagements, and plans, upon that expectation. But you are struck down: and you are never in your accustomed place more: or you come feebly back after months of absence, having gone through an awful experience of suffering, having touched the very gate of death. *That* is how it may go with

any of us. That is the condition of our being, here.

I do not wish to say more of this: for such thoughts might easily grow morbid. And your own minds will suggest far more than I can say.

There is a wrong way of taking this uncertainty and ignorance. You remember the ancient outburst of reckless despair: 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!' That seems hardly credible: but some of you have read how when the plague was in a great city, and no one could count certainly upon even a few hours of life, unhappy souls plunged into the wildest excesses of wickedness: and some know, too, how in the reign of terror of the French Revolution, many who were aware that the next morning might summon them to the guillotine, would spend the night in music and dancing: a weird gaiety indeed. Some know, too, how the Roman poet, that polished old heathen, wrote words which mean, 'Grasp the day which is present: Trust nothing to the next.' There you see one way of being swayed by the thought my text suggests.

But that is not the right way. It is exactly the opposite of the right way. The lesson for each of us is, Simple dependence upon God our Saviour:

to leave ourselves and all that concerns us and all we care for, to His charge. He may lead us, most likely He will lead us, by a path we should not have chosen : a steep path, where thorns will pierce the bleeding feet : a path that goes through the valley of humiliation, where are disappointment, bereavement, desolation : but be sure it will be the right way, which leads to the Golden City of peace and purity and re-union at the last : the City of habitations where, as the Psalmist said with such solemn significance, we ‘ shall be *satisfied*.’

It is most right, it well becomes us dependent creatures, always to remember, that we dare go onward into the unknown days before us, still keeping a good heart, only by this continual leaning upon our Blessed Redeemer. We are poor and needy, and of little account beyond a narrow circle : but the Lord thinketh upon us ; and the Almighty Saviour has our times in His hand : and He sees, perfectly, how it will go with us : yea, He has appointed how it will go with us, and all must be well : What we know not now we shall know hereafter : if we are His children indeed : and we are His children indeed, if with a true heart, keeping nothing back, we open the door in this minute for Him to come in and reign. And one likes the

homeliest reminders of how this strong sense of the great truth is in any human heart. It was always touching, when that great genius who was called of a sudden from beautiful Kent on a bright June day these years since, never would make an engagement to do anything, work or pleasure, even a very few days ahead, without the solemn words, *Please God*. Ay, Charles Dickens felt, continually, what St. Paul felt, when my text first went down upon the page which was to outlast so many written pages. Oh yes: I promise to do it, if I am spared here to do it. Yes, I will carry out that little plan, 'so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.'

It always touched me, even as a little boy, to hear the devout peasant of covenanting Ayrshire always make an engagement with that reverent recognition of the solemn fact, which would have pleased the great Apostle. 'Yes, if I am spared.' If said sincerely, and it was always said sincerely, the creature's homely but pathetic recognition of the great Creator.

There is woven into the vital constitution of the languages of Northern Europe, a singular reminder of this awe of the Future which my text expresses. Dark and true is the North:

likewise grave and God-fearing. Some here know that in our speech there is no word which expresses the bare idea of Futurity. If you know no better, you will think of Shall and Will. But these familiar words do not express Futurity. They only imply it. It is as when the awe-stricken Jew durst not utter the name of God Almighty. I *shall* do such a thing, means, *I am under obligation* to do it. I *will* do such a thing, means, *I wish, It is my present purpose and intention, to do it.* No doubt, if you are under obligation to do anything, and if you are a conscientious person, the likelihood is that the thing will be done. No doubt, too, if it be your intention to do anything, and if you be a person who stick to your purpose, the likelihood is that the thing will be done. That is, in both cases, if it please God to spare you here in health and strength, and also to keep away the innumerable accidents which may intervene to hinder. But you see, of course, that these words only *imply* Futurity. They venture not to boldly say out that awful thing which may go crashing to the heart of all we are and have, which may turn everything to dust and ashes. For to bring a human soul into direct contact with the unveiled, unmitigated thought of Futurity, is like bringing it

into contact with the thought of Infinity, of Eternity. It crushes us down. Ay, and with an unutterable sadness which these tremendous abstractions have not. *They* do but bewilder us. But here is something which for its possibilities on all we care for, is far too deep for tears.

We must distinguish, speaking of St. Paul's not making up his mind what he should do, until he saw how it pleased God it should go with him. To wait, devoutly, the leadings of God's providence, is an entirely different thing from slothfully waiting for something to turn up. It does not mean idleness, shiftlessness. It means a watchful eye for the first indication of God's will: a prompt readiness to take the step, however arduous, for which He opens the way. No sitting still, in uselessness. You see something to do, see it by the light you have. Do it: do it to your best. Work: Work hard and thoroughly: even though you remember, sometimes, ay oftentimes, that your work may all go for nothing. *That* is in another Hand. God reserves the result for his own decision. One step is enough for us to see before us. Begin to write the volume you may never finish. Diligently prepare the sermon which may never be preached. Deny yourself many things

that you may give the best education to the lad who may never live to enter upon his profession. Make your home pleasant with little possessions you will not be here to see. The issue is with God : say rather with your Blessed Saviour. We leave ourselves humbly in His merciful Hands—Amen to whatever He says is to be. It is His to fix and settle ‘how it will go with us.’ Yes, whatever it be. And it may be hard. Some will recall a forgotten poet’s touching lines : ‘It had pleased God to form poor Ned, A thing of idiot mind.’ *That* ends all question. Not, as gloomy fatalism would put it, because God has power to do anything, however cruel. Nay : but because whatever He does must be kind. We need not pretend that we see it now. But we shall see it hereafter. And, meanwhile, we wait the great teacher. As a dear and good man said when dying : ‘It is very misty now ; but it will soon be perfectly clear.’

He was speaking only of a September morning by a Highland loch. But, like God’s prophets in days departed, he spoke wiser and deeper than he knew.

Dear friends, does it seem hard to you that we must every day, and not only on the day we die, go on into a region which is behind the Veil ?

Even we can see, not always indeed, that it is better to go on so. Just to put a confiding hand in Christ's Hand; and go where that true Light leads us. No vain trying to foresee the distant scene, as that saint said: 'One step enough for me.' It was all St. Paul had. It may suffice for us.

Often, even looking but the one step ahead, we shall be mistaken. One has known 'Yes: it is as sure as anything *can* be.' But it was never to be. One has known a sufferer, stricken with sudden illness, say, 'Is it dangerous? But I must keep warm and quiet, and it will go away; as other things have gone.'—This was not to go: It was the last trouble here.

It was by a true inspiration from the Divine Spirit of all truth, that a chiefest poet named, as a characteristic of a higher life and a better world, 'the Past unsighed-for, and the Future sure.'

It is not in the very least inconsistent with what has been said, when I add that, as we go on in our pilgrimage, and come to the latter days, we do know, in some kind of way, how it must needs go with us: not details, which will all be found out in due time; but the general lot which is appointed to all. In early youth, there are 'things

hoped for': sometimes pictured-out, with a buoyant spirit. A useful life, perhaps lived in the esteem of the few who know us. A peaceful home, where the quiet years pass over in the society of those dearest, perhaps with the echoes of pattering little feet and soft childish voices. But not the best one knows have in fact been placed the highest: in this world the unscrupulous pusher makes his way. And as for the happy home, how frail our hold of all that gives it value: one has known the precious life cut short, and the hearth cold and desolate, very early: as it must be sooner or later. Ay, one of you, so united, must see the other dying, must see the other dead. And there is no sadder sight, than to see a cheery man or woman who has quite got over things: things which ought never to be got over. Better to be crushed into the very earth. No doubt pain and grief are transitory. 'The things which are seen are temporal.' But though they leave us, they should not leave us the men we were.

But, going on (if that be appointed us), we must face failing strength and enfeebled faculties. The trouble in your bodily constitution will be growing stronger; and you weaker,—less able to bear it. And it must needs be very heavy and

trying, the sense that now you cannot do your work as of old ; the prospect that some day soon you may have to give it up altogether. The step will be feeble : the hand will shake : it will be pathetic how the hand-writing will change. A saintly man, who gave us some of our most beautiful hymns, said it was sad to meet old friends and they did not know him : so failed. Yet, through seasons of depression, we can but lean upon Christ ; and wait the coming of the Blessed Comforter. We shall not, foolishly, shut our eyes to the facts ; and make ourselves absurd by pretending to be what we are not now. I do not know that we are likely to find it true, in any worldly sense, that ' the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' But sure it is, the Best will be found beyond these troubles. And ' at evening-time it shall be light.'

Now all is said, it remains a strange thing to us poor souls to think how God may allow it to go with us. Perhaps with no prognostic. For these weeks past, I have looked daily, across a stretch of the very garden of England, to a green hill whereon, a little since, the most charmingly-eloquent of physical philosophers died. Did he

ever dream, that cheery man, that the day would come when his devoted wife should give him, laid on his bed, the wrong medicine; and just a minute of life be left for the words, 'My darling, you have killed your John'? But that is little to what I have known: One who held the highest place in the reverence of many, fall into shame which made him become as one dead. God keep us, dear friends, from evil. But St. Paul's mind was as that of the Heathen sage who said, 'Call no man happy before he dies.' Not, till then, can we be sure that the best shall not bitterly disappoint us.

And now, coming to an end. Would you like to know more? Would you like to see, to-day, how it is to go with you: aye, only for six months to come? Would you like to be assured that you shall live to finish the work you have begun: or that your power to be of some use in this world will end only with your life: and that when you lie down to die at last, there will be some one to care for you?

I do not know. But be patient, pilgrims who have journeyed on through many years. Things are fleeting fast. It cannot be very long till you

shall see exactly how it will go with you. The day will declare it all.

Of one thing I am sure : if the Future is to be as the Past. When you are brought to the end, all things here and the remembrance of them, will fade away. And concerns which once fevered you, will vanish even from memory. In the pain and weariness of the last days (God make them few!), these things are not. Ay, startlingly so. Many hearty services we have known in this church in these thirty years : the lifting-up of praise and prayer, the silence of Holy Communion : and at the exhortation, the awful hush. Through that strange time, this church will be quite forgotten ; and you will never remember a word said here. But it will be enough, if that may be, to look with the fading eyes to the Redeemer ; and with the failing hand to cling to the Cross.

SATISFIED

X

*SATISFIED*¹

‘I shall be satisfied.’—PSALM xvii. 15.

SOME day. Somewhere. Not today. Not here. Not tomorrow, if tomorrow finds me in this world. Not anywhere, that is beneath the sky, that is this side the grave.

Yet, if we are earnestly living as we ought to live, each day wishing and trying to please God by doing right: each day, as people feeling how infinitely short, even in our own biassed judgment, we fall of doing *that*, laying hold anew of the free salvation offered to each of us in our Blessed Redeemer: there will be a day, and a place, in which each anxious unsatisfied soul here,—meanwhile disappointed and discontent,—thirsting for what never came, and never will be,—getting, perhaps, many things, but not that on which the heart was set,—or, at a more advanced

¹ Parish Church, St. Andrews: Sunday, July 14, 1895.

stage, vaguely craving for better, fuller, longer-lasting, than anything or all things here,—will be able at last to say,—‘I am satisfied.’

We poor human beings do not need just to sit down and make up our mind that we are doomed to be disappointed in everything;—that by our make it has to be so;—that there is a thirst in us which never can be slaked, and a void which never can be filled. If we make choice of Christ as our portion, and really go to Him for rest (the thing can in fact be done); then, however unlikely it looks now, the hour will come which will give us all our desire. ‘We shall be satisfied!’

A curious thing indeed that in the New Testament the word *satisfied* does not occur: not once. Yet that is the Book which specially shews us how and where our craving nature is to be absolutely content at last.

Here is what we all need: ‘I shall be satisfied.’ Nobody here is ever fully so, for any length of time: that is the condition of our being. We cannot get all we want. I am not speaking of preposterous and extravagant wants, but of reasonable wants. An unfettered imagination can easily picture out things we shall never get, and never ought to get: but I put that folly aside: I am thinking

of a far deeper truth, and that deeply concerns modest and reasonable folk : that the blight of imperfection, of lacking something of fully and finally satisfying us, is upon all things here. Solomon found that out, long ago, through a most exceptional experience ; and put his conclusion in words which will live with our language and with divers languages beside : but I know well that a feeling lurks in us that the unforgettable sum of Ecclesiastes is a somewhat morbid conclusion ; and somewhat divergent from the actual creed of sober health and industry. It reminds us, I think unfairly, but reminds, of that wicked old Prince, of unlimited power and wealth, who had so exhausted the possibilities of this world, that all that remained to him was to long that the river under his windows would run dry. It reminds some, who in youth were fascinated and enthralled by poetry whose witchery has now (I think) in great measure passed away, of Byron's contemptible sham and impostor of a hero : mooning about this world, cursing a creation which was far too good for him, and a race of which he was about the most despicable specimen himself.

We shall have none of that nonsense here, you may be sure. This is not the place for sentimental

affectation, or posing to astonish silly people. We must have reality to sustain us, who feel this world slipping away from us ; who often have it borne in how many of our generation have gone before us. Ay, you need it, every one of you ; however young and hopeful you may be.

It is a wonderful thought ; and one to hold by on many trying days and disappointing days here (and we may be disappointed even at the holy communion-table) : a wonderful thing to be sure that all longings in us which Christ would approve will be satisfied some time. When we awake, awake from the sleep of death, we shall feel that here we have got everything now : that we are complete and content as it never was before : that we are satisfied by the sight of God. It was vainly dreamt and said here, but it has come at last : ‘ If I could see Thee, ’twould be well with me !’

Satisfied, by the sight of God. I know, saying such words, we feel we are entering a realm of thought which transcends our understanding ; and is quite outside our present experience. And, so doing, I know well that there is a readiness to fancy that we are passing away from reality, and solid fact. The unspiritual mind,—and we are all of us sadly unspiritual,—can understand being

satisfied by getting everything we want or wish, and by being assured we shall always have it : but that is not the Christian heaven. That is the Happy Island of a mistaken faith : most assuredly of an incomplete faith ; fit only for the childhood of the Race. The Psalmist lived long ago : but here, for once, he had anticipated the most advanced teaching of the New Testament. There, you remember what sums up the essential blessedness of the blessed state : ‘ And so shall we ever be with the Lord.’ But the Apostle, looking earnestly into the Future of which we know so little : only that it will be well, perfectly well, with poor craving human souls : has got no farther on than the man who lived ages before under a twilight dispensation,—morning twilight,—twilight that rises, not that sets,—when he wrote the verse which contains my text. ‘ As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.’

Not that form of God which is to our present understanding inconceivable ; and which is invisible by human eye : the form of the Infinite One Who is equally present throughout infinite space, and Who inhabits eternity : our intellect is crushed down when brought in contact with such

thoughts. Not that, indeed. But the form of God seen and realized in our Blessed Saviour : in the person of His Son ; 'Who is the image of the invisible God.'

Yes. Every now and then, as we go on and as we think of things, we are brought back to an old conclusion, often reached before, and each time as though it were something new : a conclusion which a saint, long at rest, put in pathetic words far towards two thousand years ago. For we arrive at that conclusion by divers paths, and from divers quarters of the compass of solemn experience. I do not really think it was ever voiced better than by St. Augustine : and on his page it is a jewel shining out amid much rubbish. 'Thou madest us for Thyself ; and our heart is restless till it resteth in Thee.'

He wrote another memorable sentence, concerning that mysterious state in which, for the first time fully and finally, we shall be satisfied. There, he says, 'All virtue will be to love what one sees ; and the highest happiness to have what one loves.'

There is always something wanting here. A man thinks to himself,—when I get this volume written, I shall be satisfied. If I could get that great improvement carried out : If I saw my

children settled: If I could get this fruitful truth accepted by the community amid which I live: Ah, each of you can fill into this sentence something for your own self:—then, I should be satisfied,—I should never try for anything more. But suppose you get the very thing you wished,—and that is a tremendous assumption,—you will in a very little while find that you cannot live in the Past: You will propose a new end to be attained, and you will be restless till you get that. By the very make of our being, to every earnest man, as long as strength and heart last, it has got to be ‘Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.’ And that just means, Not content yet: Not satisfied. Ah, it is chasing the horizon; which always recedes before us as we go on. The old have found that out: *They* know that now. We cannot finally sit down and rest here; till strength and life fail us. And then it will not be because we are content; but because we can do no more.

You know, indeed, that such a thing may be as being perfectly content for a little while. Just at the first, after great fatigue,—after long and exhausting work,—we are thankful simply to rest and nothing more. Or, when delivered from

great trouble, great pain, great anxiety, we are satisfied for that day : thankful if we may just sit down and feel at ease. There is, indeed, such a thing as to rest and be thankful. But only for a brief space. The capacity for work revives : the craving for work re-awakes : We must be up and at it again. God, Who made us, made us so : unless we be very sloths. The end of work is to enjoy rest. But the end of rest is to take manfully to work again.

And, of course, saying that we can never be finally satisfied here, it is not altogether trivial to say that there is such a thing as being quite satisfied in details. We need not quarrel with a common way of talking which is real so far as it goes. We say, We are satisfied, We have satisfied ourselves, that such a thing is true ; and that such another thing is false : that such a man may be relied upon, and such another may not : that such a man has got on by fair and honest means, and such another by pushing, by impudence, by dishonesty. Here indeed is often a very sorrowful satisfaction : and though we use the word, it is in a hasty, technical way, and with little consideration of its great, solemn, far-reaching meaning. It is pedantic to be too precise in our use of current

phrases. And everybody knows how to take them up. Yet it is well, now and then, seriously to reflect, that we are lightly using very solemn language : and that the large, lasting, real ' I shall be satisfied,' can only be far away. Never on this side of time.

But it is indeed something to cling to, that we human beings need not always be discontent : longing for what can never be. *That* endless craving comes of our being rational, and immortal : it comes of our place in the scale of being : the highest, so far as things have yet come to, in this visible universe. We must take the pains, as well as the dignity (if the word be allowed), of being God's last and chief work here : the latest development (so far) of the miracle of life. Those creatures of God's hand which we call the Inferior Animals are able to be fully satisfied as we cannot meanwhile be. Give them food, and rest, and freedom from pain, and from fear : and they seem to desire no more. As for us, even in the matter of present enjoyment, it is commonly as was said in a famous line : ' Albeit all is fair, there lacketh something still.' Or if, for the little present hour, we have all we desire, then we crave the assurance that it should last : as knowing it will not. It

comes back to me, as oftentimes before, that bright summer morning in my beautiful country parish : the blaze of sunshine on the gleaming grass : the grand trees and the running water : and then the kindly old man who was lord of it all, looking with a wistful face on the fair possessions that he felt slipping from his failing hand : and the quiet sentence which he never dreamt I should be quoting a generation after he was in the clay : ‘Yes, if I could have a nine hundred and ninety-nine years’ lease of it!’ And he was right : perfectly right. We immortal beings cannot be satisfied with anything shorter-lived than ourselves. Speaking in that homely phrase, familiar in Scottish ears, he meant Eternity ! He meant, No end at all. For if the centuries of possession came to an end, leaving him to go on desolate, they might as well never have been. As well never have been, unless we could go out with them too. And even then, the bitter drop would be in every cup, the shivery chill always by the warm fireside.—*All this must end. It is slipping away now !* Could you bear to look in the faces of those dearest to you ; and then to think, In a little we must part for ever and ever ? Not the supreme among our Race, not Shakspeare himself, ever so put utter desolation into

human speech, as in the homely but unforgettable line that gives voice to that mortal thought : ' Never come again : Never, never, never, never, never ! '

Aye, it is true as St Paul said, just altering one word of his : ' If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all God's creatures most miserable ! '

It is a most awful view of this state of being, to think there is nothing beyond what our five senses shew us. Just this universe, with its cruel, inexorable natural laws, which punish us terribly and then leave us to find out why : just nature, ' red in tooth and claw with ravine ' : just the struggle for the means of bare existence for untold millions : just man's injustice and savagery to his fellow-man : just torturing disease and then hopeless death : I am bold to declare that the positivist spoke true to his desolate creed when he said ' Life is a bad business.' Most assuredly, life would not be worth living. The sublime despair of the old Greek would be the only conclusion, ' Not to be, is best of all.'

For God has said we never can be satisfied, never right, here. It is a struggle : an anxiety : a disappointment : a repentance : a ceaseless looking back on mistakes which cannot be rectified, on

sins and follies which cannot be forgotten : now and then the awful parting, from place or from people, which is like to break the heart. That, if we did not know Christ and what He has revealed, is the sum of life here. And oh, if there were nowhere else !

But I can well imagine good reasonable folk as saying that we need not go to transcendental considerations to prove that we never can be fully satisfied on this side of time. In sober fact, we do not come to the point of thinking that all the world can give, if you got it, would leave a blank within. We never come in sight, most of us, of getting even the modest things which we might reasonably wish and hope for. We know, perfectly, what keeps us uneasy. It is not that All is vanity : It is the sorrow, the privation, the anxiety, the little cross-incident, which comes fresh and fresh as we plod on our lowly way. The day never dawns which does not bring its worry. The blankness of disappointment must be a never-long-absent experience in this world, where we are continually wishing and hoping for things, lesser and greater, which do not come. Jars and strifes and storms will arise from the most-unexpected quarters. Things within the home and without it

will go wrong. It is a rare thing, not always attainable by the greatest tact and temper, that a number of human beings should work together in entire harmony, year after year. Trouble is due : it is sure to come. That is the condition of our being, here. 'Born to trouble ; as the sparks fly upward' : as naturally, as certainly. The writer of that most ancient Book had found it out.

It may be, you think, that all earth can give, though we got it all, would not put us right : but we know meanwhile what the things are which keep us wrong : and we sometimes think they might be mended. Ah, no. Mend these : and others will come, in unending succession. It is vain to hope for the joyous heart, or even the quiet heart, here. It is storm and strife : a world of quarrel, jealousy, and controversy.

Of course we ought to take all that comes, humbly and patiently, with resigned spirit : and we try to do so. Of course, it is all working for good ; and we are being led by the right way. Still, no affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous. It is not what we hoped, in our youth : this plodding along a thorny way. As our great genius wrote, plainly in deep sincerity, 'Man was made to mourn' : unconscious echo of St. Paul's

‘We must through much tribulation.’ And, notwithstanding all endeavours to persuade ourselves that it is far better as it is, the heart of mankind breaks out in the declaration that in a better world it is not to be. ‘There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.’ We took them patiently; and tried to persuade ourselves that they were right and good, when we had to bear them. But it will be Paradise, it will be Heaven, when they ‘are passed away.’

I will go back upon this. Does my text seem to pitch the truth too high? Your heart replies to it: Quite needless to say you would not be content though you got all you want; for you never will get all you want. Many wishes and cares will abide with you here. You never will be rid of them till you have passed away from all this: into Christ’s presence. Then, ‘Satisfied.’ Not till then.

All this is not said in any morbid or unreasonable spirit. It does not mean that we are not thankful for a little thing; nor that we do not feel, deeply, that we get far more than we deserve. All that is said is that God has

made us immortal beings for Himself; and we shall not find our satisfying portion till we see Him: see Him as He is to be seen by such as we. And then, as St. Paul said with another thought in his mind, '*With Him, all things.*' Every innocent and right desire and affection that is in us will find what it craved: from the enjoyment of fields and trees and streams, of rural quiet and city vitality, to the meeting again with parted friends where farewells are a sound unknown.

Nor am I delivering to you a moral essay: far less a discourse in transcendental metaphysics. Here are indeed the deep things of our nature. Yet it is but the old, old story, looked at from a varied point of view. It is the Gospel of Him Who said, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.' 'I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.'

A sublime promise; and wide indeed in its reach. For to *thirst no more*, means that you have attained all your desire, and are sure that you never will lose it. And the righteous cravings that are in our nature are numberless; and infinite in their variety. How many things are pleasant to us! And to be with our Saviour where He is, is

to have them all. Here, the purest and best wishes must needs be often denied. We pray for many a blessing, spiritual as well as temporal, which does not come. Perfect peace: elevated devotion: the sensible presence of the Holy Spirit: to be blessed indeed, and so kept from evil that it may not grieve us: that all we care for and all we know be kept in the right way to our Father's house above: Just to name only these gives us a sad and thirsting heart. Then, to think: Some day, we shall be with Christ; and we SHALL BE SATISFIED!

XI
LESSONS OF AUTUMN

XI

*LESSONS OF AUTUMN*¹

‘And we all do fade as a leaf.’—ISAIAH lxiv. 6.

I SUPPOSE that there is hardly one of us, in whose mind even in this comparatively treeless region, some such thought as this has not sometimes risen within these last few days. For by God’s providence protecting us, our lives have been lengthened out to behold that season of the year which in every age has fallen with a pensive influence on the heart of man. The russet woods of autumn, so still, so beautiful, so suggestive, are here once more : and soon the chill November will be making the field and forest bare. They are dying indeed in beauty : for not even when the beech wore its soft summer green, and the chestnut its fair blossoms, was the earth overspread with such magnificent array as that scarlet and gold in which the trees are clad in these last days of

¹ Parish Church, St. Andrews : Sunday October 21, 1888.

autumn. Yet as in the audible stillness of the autumn day, we mark the soft October sunshine lighting up the golden and brown October woods, and see the crisp leaves rustling down,—an old story suggests itself. For only too aptly does the season type our own life's course: and looking abroad on those masses of foliage, once so green and bright, but now so sere and yellow, we be-think ourselves that something within us is going the way of all things around us: and ready to our lips come the words of the ancient prophet, 'We all do fade as a leaf.' Through the clear atmosphere; through the subdued, gray light; Nature, beautiful in decay, is speaking to us: and the russet leaves address to us their simple, unaffected story. It seems as if they said, Ah you human beings, something besides us is fading: Here we are, the things like which *you* fade!

It is one of those natural sentiments this, which at some time or other, and in some form or other, has been felt and uttered by every thinking being. It was too apt a comparison to be overlooked long, or to be overlooked by any. Many a time has the forest been clad in its summer beauty, and many a time has winter made its branches bare, since first it suggested itself to a human soul,—

Now I, and all around me, are fading like those fading leaves. Surely that thought is fresh as to-day, for it must have occurred to us as we walked to church over fallen foliage and under bare branches: and it is likewise old as the day when the first withered leaf rustled to the foot of the father of mankind. We find words like those of my text upon the lips of sage and savage: they have been spoken in every country on the world's face; and many a time, we may be sure, in every autumn of all these thousands that are past and gone. Yet let us now give heed for a little to these words before us; and see whether we may not draw some helpful instruction even from a thought so commonplace, as that 'we all do fade as a leaf.'

Then, although I am quite sure that each of us knows just as well as may be that this text speaks truth, still I do not think it will be time mis-spent, if I give my discourse this morning to endeavouring to deepen upon our minds the sense and the teaching of the fleetingness of our cares and of our life; for I appeal to you if it be not so, that we often feel a truth all the less, just for that it is so plain that we admit it without a question: And I wonder how many of us will venture to say, that

day by day as we toil at our accustomed work, as we think of the ends and objects we hold dear, as we walk these ways, and look upon these prospects, and speak with those we know,—that amid all this we keep it present to our minds, that we are going away fast from the scenes that know us: that truly ‘the things which are seen are temporal’: that we are fading like the fading leaves.

In letting our minds rest for a space upon the field of survey brought before us in the text, there is one thought which readily suggests itself; but which I think we are all of us very ready to forget. When we look at these words of the prophet, which liken our cares and ourselves to some of the most fleeting things in nature,—to a leaf,—not to a tree, which stands on in the wood year after year, which grows now, and will grow after we are gone,—not to that comparatively lasting object, but to the fragile leaf which comes but for a season, and which any slight accident may destroy even before its season is run,—we think yes, that is all very true: we shall all of us, some day, fade like a leaf. We shall all do that some day. We have seen people faded and fading like a leaf. We have seen the old man with tottering step, and thin white hair: and we have seen decay, too, come before

its time to the young and fair, and wearing them down from life. But what the text suggests, and we forget, is this : that even now the process is going on that shall lay us in our last restingplace. It is not, 'We all *shall* fade as a leaf' : Day by day, and hour by hour, that change is passing upon *us* which passes on the leaves in autumn. And when I would point you to the most affecting instance of this fading of all human things, I would not select those things upon which we already see most trace of decay. I would not point you to the mouldering ruin, girt with the ivy's green life : not to the palsied step of age, nor to the worn cheek that tells of fast coming dissolution. I would point you to Nature in her gayest moods : to the sunshine of summer days,—to the gentle lapse of silvery waters,—to the bright face of infant mirth : and I would tell you that there it is, where we see no trace of fading ;—there it is, where youth sports and plays as if it never would grow old ;—that *there* is most need to bring home to our hearts the solemn sentence that speaks the doom of humanity —'we all *do* fade as a leaf.'

Now we believe that in the heart of all of us there is a strong tendency to miscalculate the season of fading. We each of us are ready to

fancy that *that* season is in the days of old age. We each of us are ready to fancy that we *shall* fade then. But look what the fact is. *When* is it that the vast majority of human beings fade? Is it not the fact that it is but a small number that reach what we regard as the furthest limits of human life, the three-score and ten or four-score years? And what right has any young or middle-aged person to believe that he or she shall be reckoned amid that favoured number? The utmost that even on a calculation of what is probable we are entitled to look for, is what may be termed the average duration of human life. And how far *that* comes short of seventy or eighty! And here there is a point of difference between the fading of our race, and that of the leaves: for the great mass of *them* does endure on far into that season whose frosts and gales are to kill them all. But how few of us are spared to see life's late autumn: how few of us are spared by accident and disease, to be worn out only by the process of Time! Yes, the leaves for the most part fade in autumn; but there is no season in life at which man may not droop and die. A thousand things may come in to anticipate the psalmist's allotment of years: there is perhaps not a single age at which some man has not died.

As we walk abroad through the russet woods, cannot we all recal to our minds the many within our own acquaintance who have passed at every stage from this life? Some have just as it were alighted on the threshold of life, and then fluttered and taken wing. Some in winsome childhood, in hopeful youth, in busy maturity, are taken away from the place they knew and the friends that loved them. 'As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more.'

And even should no sudden stroke come in, and prematurely cut short our life; think how certainly and how fast our time is running out. You have some time perhaps looked at some noble tree which was marked to fall ere long by the woodman's axe: There it stood, as green and fresh as its companions round,—still living and still beautiful: but did it not seem to you as if the certain doom before it already gave it a different look from those which were to be spared? Now when you look at any man, no matter how healthful and vigorous, you cannot but remember that his doom has gone forth; that sentence is recorded against him; that it will be executed as certainly

as God lives ; and that it is merely a question of how much time before the stroke shall fall. One reason why many men are apt to overlook this fact, that their life is running out so fast, is that after they arrive at what is called 'middle age,' they remain perhaps for years very little changed even in outward appearance ; very much the same in their feeling of health and vigour, and their power of labour and exertion. But never forget, that even if by God's kindness, we are not reminded of it by increasing infirmities, enfeebled faculties, diminished energy,—still we are fading day by day : we are 'dying daily' : every evening sees us nearer to our last. And even where advancing infirmity is not as yet painfully felt, there is much to remind every one who has passed beyond early youth how he is fading. The lightheartedness of former days, their overflowing spirits, their elastic vigour—how much all these are gone ! And it is not long till even more decided indications of decay make themselves manifest : gray hairs : diminished strength : indisposition to undertake exertions which once seemed easy : a languor stealing on : the active arm, and the agile hand, not as before. And all these things are proofs that the process of fading has advanced and is advancing. They are

death's shadow, cast before him, as he is coming on.

But enough of the mere sense of this passage : let me now ask you to think of its teaching. I need not remind you that a heathen philosopher could tell us all this : that a man who had never heard of Christ, could tell you in far better words than mine, how the doom of decay is written on man and man's works. I might find the words of my text in Homer, as well as in Isaiah. The mere worldling might tell us, with unutterable sadness, that all things pass on ; that he is growing old and older, whether he will or no ; that there is no staying as we are. But what then ?

Surely the first lesson which immortal beings should learn from the transience of all things on earth, would be to lay up their treasure in another world where precious possessions do not decay. We have two sets of interests to choose between : there are the 'things on earth,' and there are the 'things above' : and we must give our preference to either the one or the other. I need not say to you that it is not Christianity but heathenism, not truth but stoicism, to affect to set no value at all upon the things of this life. Earthly blessings are valuable and excellent in their own place : and the

Christian, who regards them as proofs of his heavenly Father's kind remembrance, and who has something better to look to after *they* are taken from him, ought to feel a far keener enjoyment of them than the mere worldly man, who sets all his heart upon them, and who has nothing to look to besides them. But as autumn reminds us how all earthly things fade, it teaches that we ought not to set our entire and supreme affection upon them. It teaches us to receive them with thankfulness while they remain ; but to be prepared for their going, and to have something better to fall back upon after they are gone. The wailing winds and the fallen leaves come in as an echo of that counsel of our blessed Saviour, which says in few words almost all that there is to be said about the respective deservings of earth and heaven, of time and eternity : 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal : But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.'

We might indeed enforce the same lesson by reminding you that earthly blessings and possessions, even while they last, have not the power to

make us fully and perfectly happy. But granting that they did ;—granting what we all know is not true, that worldly success, a fair domain, an abundant income, (and how few can have such) could make their possessor as happy as the human soul can be ;—oh brethren, would it not be bitter for one thus favoured to look round upon his magnificence,—or upon his warm comfort, better far than chilly magnificence,—and to think that in a few years, in a few days perhaps, he must go away from all this, and his soul enter on a world in which the poorest that believed in Christ is richer a million times than he! Is it not true, that the happier this life is, it only makes the thought of quitting it the more terrible to the man who has no hope beyond it? You remember, ‘Ah, David, these are the things that make death terrible.’¹ The poet² tells us, hardly indeed with truth, that Death is the poor man’s best friend: it takes him from a world of pinching want and ceaseless toil, to that narrow bed where ‘the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest’: but it is a very different messenger to one well content with things here. I remember vividly, a beautiful summer day, long ago: I see the shafts of sun-

¹ Johnson to Garrick.

² Burns.

shine coming through thick boughs, making the turf a blaze of verdant gold. The master of that leafy domain of rural peacefulness was standing in front of his beautiful abode: a kind good old man of seventy-two. It was natural to say to him, 'What a lovely place you have got!' But the old man sadly shook his head, and replied, 'Ah, if one could have a nine hundred and ninety-nine years lease of it!' He has gone where it is *far better*: but his serious words conveyed the great truth that we, immortal beings, cannot find our rest among things which will come to an end. We must have an outlook which has no limit. The years thus named, meant Eternity. We cannot do with anything less than the 'inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.'

Let me suggest to you, as a further lesson of the Autumn, not to be envious though you see other human beings in the enjoyment of many earthly blessings which are denied to you. No one can live in a country like this, without being often and painfully impressed with the vast differences which exist between the outward lots of men, who so far as merit goes, are exactly on a level. Before God, all men are equal. As towards God, no man deserves anything good. Yet, in His

mysterious providence, He allows some to be placed in circumstances in which every real and every fanciful want is anticipated, and every appliance of luxury is at hand : while others by incessant labour can barely earn what may sustain bare life. I do not believe that it is right that one sinful human being should be feasted, flattered, cringed to,—while his fellow-worm can find no better than rags for a covering, a hovel for a dwelling, and the bare ‘bread to eat’ : not *that* : I do not believe that God appointed *that*, though He may permit it : and I say that such a state of things implies something greatly amiss somewhere : I do not know where : but now I merely mention the thing as a fact. And I venture to say, further, that it is not necessarily the best and most deserving of mankind, who obtain the largest share of earthly wealth and prosperity. There may be such a thing as riches increasing and multiplying in the coffers of a man who never thanks God for the success He sends ;—who never dreams that he is God’s steward, and must answer to Him for all. And there may be such a thing as disaster following on every enterprise of the praying and God-fearing man : there has been such a thing as a life of honour and truth closed in the almshouse before

now. But what lesson do we learn from all this? Is it that God favours the godless, and neglects His own? Nay, not so. We rather learn that in God's judgment these prizes and losses of this Vanity Fair are held of no great moment. We all fade as a leaf: the good and ill of this state of being are but a moment's blink of sunshine; a moment's passing cloud. That, when really taken in, and not said as a bit of cant, is the most calming of all reflections. But the Holy Spirit must carry it home.

I can picture to my mind some lowly Christian, standing in the stillness of the autumn day, on a height whence his eye takes in the rich turrets and the noble woods of some one among the favoured princes of the world. I can imagine him thinking to himself, How different is *that* man's lot from mine! Alike in helplessness at birth, alike in sinfulness before God, alike marked for death,—how different we are in life! Hundreds applaud whatever he does: a good many will suspend the Ten Commandments in his favour: his every whim and fancy meet their instant gratification. While as for me, the poor man thinks, I have known cold and hunger, I have seen those I loved sinking into the grave for want of what the crumbs that fall

from that man's table would buy. I know of immortal beings who would be thankful for the dwelling of his horses, and the food of his hounds. And as such thoughts steal in, brethren, I can imagine the lowly Christian feeling some not unnatural tendency to envy and discontent. But the autumn wind rattles the skeleton branches above his head, and rustles the sere and yellow leaves to his feet : and at the quiet suggestion of these simple monitors, better thoughts prevail. Like these leaves we are fading, he thinks, the rich man and the poor. In a little he must bid farewell to his magnificent home, and I to my bare fireside : and then we shall both enter a world in which it will never matter whether we were rich or poor. And if heaven is as open to me as to him, and Christ as freely offered : if in a hundred years all the differences of riches and rank will to us have ceased for ever : then let him keep his wealth and may it make him happy ; and may we both stand together at the Judge's right hand at last !

I have thus, in this time of woods turning leafless and of fast-shortening days, suggested to you these thoughts and lessons of Autumn. And my prayer is, that in so far as they are in accordance

with God's mind and will, they may be impressed upon our hearts by the power of His Holy Spirit. I have not the slightest faith in any reflections on the frailty of our frame doing us the least good, unless they be carried home to us by His irresistible demonstration. Yet, being so carried home, they have proved mighty to convince and convert. You have heard of the careless man, awakened, startled, led to seek and find a Saviour, by hearing read in church that fifth chapter of Genesis, in which the history of each patriarch ends with the words 'And he died.' Hundreds have heard all *that*, and never been a whit the better for it: just as thousands have been reminded that 'we all do fade as a leaf,' and felt on their hearts just no lasting impression at all. We have all a wonderful power to put away from us any realized sense of religious truth; specially where religion touches upon morality or upon sentiment: these things go away from us, and leave us the worldly people we so sadly tend to be: though indeed they are no more useless than all religious truth is, when not enforced by the Holy Ghost. But He will help us, if we truly ask Him, to feel, with a new reality, the shortness of our stay here; and to labour, daily, to be laying up our treasure in Heaven, and

by God's grace to be preparing ourselves for a lasting Home there. He will help us to realize this truth in my text, not as it is on the pages of mere moralizers and sentimentalists, but 'as it is in Jesus'! O the spiritual destitution of the soul, which, in this world wherein 'we all do fade as a leaf,' has nothing to look to beyond this world! God forbid that any of us, by putting from us a Saviour's offered mercy, should remain in that desperate state! And oh the solid peace, the abounding rest,—always humble indeed, and not always equable,—of those, who, recalling my text at this season which must bring it back to all, are able thankfully to think of magnificent words of St. Peter,—and take them for their own :

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead : To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you !'

XII

QUIET

XII

*QUIET*¹

‘ And that ye study to be quiet.’—I THESSALONIANS iv. II.

OTHERS might be noisy and turbulent, delighting in strife and tumult and excitement : Others might think there was something tame and unmanly in the calm virtues of life, which have their home by the peaceful fireside, and their exercise in lowly ways : Other might have no mind to keep regularly to their work, and to prosecute it steadily day by day : Others might have a taste for an irregular, Arab-like life, all deviations from the stedfast path : Others might like the storm, the bustle, the hurry, the crowd : but St. Paul would not have it thus with his Christian friends at Thessalonica. Compelled as he himself was to a life of constant travel, and work, and warfare, he knew what a privilege they possessed who had it in their power to continue faithful to their Christian calling, and yet to

¹ Kirkpatrick-Irongray, Sunday February 24, 1856.

abide peacefully in their homes : and with a mind that lingered on the pleasing picture of days spent in a stillness which he could never know, he desires to sketch out in a single short sentence, what he regarded as incumbent on Christian men and women as a duty, and at the same time permitted as an inestimable privilege : and so his precept and his advice are, ' that ye study to be quiet.'

I need not tell you that this word *quiet*, is one which we find in various other passages of scripture, used to describe the true Christian's life. In the first Epistle to Timothy St. Paul directs prayer to be made ' for all men, for kings and all that are in authority : that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty : for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.' You will remember how St. Peter speaks of ' the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.' St. Paul, in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, exhorts some who had proved unruly and meddling, that ' with quietness they should work, and eat their own bread.' You will think of words in which the prophet Isaiah shews us how highly he valued this blessing : ' And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and

assurance for ever.' Think also of the words of God by the same prophet, 'In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.' And the wisest of men has left in more places than one his judgment as to what it is worth sacrificing for the sake of peace and quiet: 'Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.' 'My people shall dwell in quiet resting-places,' was a great and gracious promise: and nothing happier could be said of Jerusalem, the city of God, than that 'thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation.' It would be easy to multiply texts all in the same strain: but quite enough has already been said to shew you that the Bible represents that quietness is at once the Christian's privilege and the Christian's duty. And in discoursing for a little while upon this subject, we purpose, with God's blessing, to endeavour first to understand what Christian quietness is, and then to consider some reasons why we should 'study to be quiet.'

Surely, my friends, there never has been an age of this world's history, in which such a precept as that which forms my text was more needed. This is especially an age of excitement, of hurry, of bustle, of restlessness and unquiet. Nor are

these confined to the great city, which is like the nation's throbbing heart: in calm country scenes too, the feverish worry of the soul of man contrasts sadly with the stillness of outward nature. Medical men tell us that those diseases which are caused by over-anxiety, over-exertion, are cutting off scores of men now for every one to whom they proved fatal in calmer and less excited times. The vast improvements which have been made in all departments of science of late years, have tended powerfully and directly to hurry forward the wheels of life. In former days, the man who had to make a journey of some hundred miles, was compelled to have some days of quiet thought whether he would or not by the mere duration of his travelling: some of you may think of one good and earnest man,¹ who said that in these old times his days of travelling were to him 'the most restful days of the year.'

But now, we fly across a kingdom in half a day, with a whirl all around us wherever we pause: and instead of carrying away in our hearts the pictures of green country nooks, and villages sleeping in the sunshine, and resting pools under the country bridge, we come home with a confused

¹ Dr. Arnold of Rugby.

remembrance of hurrying faces, of clatter and bustle, of flights though startled fields and pauses amid the roar of black ugly towns, of push and breathless eagerness and a ceaseless race against time.

Then we are often told that there never was an age when work was so constant and so hard : thoughtful and meditative men now are pushed to the wall ; and the great stream hurries by. It is toil, early and late, in workshop, countinghouse manufactory, senate, everywhere : and even some Christian churches, getting into the spirit of the age, what with this scheme and the other, this meeting and the other, societies, schools, and what not, seem to the dizzy eye and aching head, more like the whirl and tremour and buzz of the Factory, with its steam pushed to the utmost, than the thoughtful earnest steady and unspasmodic action which is best befitting. Oh, it is good for us to turn into cool green paths for a little space : to get off the hard dusty beaten path of daily work and worry ; and to wander as by murmuring streams, in leaf-shaded light ; to lay the jaded limbs on green turf, and let the heart's tumult cease, and subside into healthful unfevered beating ! Who can think of his soul, his salvation, his eternity, if he is in a perpetual breathless hurry ? What

wonder if the cares of the world oftentimes choke the word : if through the multitude of business the spiritual wants are clean forgotten, and at length, when suddenly prostrated, perhaps, on a dying bed, the man has to cry out in anguish that in seeking to gain a little of the world he has lost his soul : that time went on in such a constant bustle, that he never observed how fast it was going ; and that now the fearful upshot of the whole is this, that ‘ the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and he is not saved ’ ! Oh then, if you would not be juggled into living and labouring as if you had no immortal souls : if you would not come to yourselves only on the bed of death or upon the shore of the unseen world, to feel that life is past, and life’s work not done : beware how you throw yourselves with too warm devotion into the transitory work and excitement of this earth. Remember that there is something that should be sought in preference to earthly success : Remember that there is a great work to do which *cannot* be done in a fretful fever : and so enter into your closet, and shut out the world : You must not be flurried when you pray, you must not be in a fever when you are examining yourself how you stand with God : Over-bustle is in these days Satan’s last

great temptation : and so seek that the pulse may go down, that the bloodheat may abate, that the chafing billows may sink into peacefulness : so 'study to be quiet.'

But, what, then, you will say, is this quietness which the great apostle seems to regard as the congenial atmosphere for the Christian life to thrive in ? If it be a thing that can be only amid scenes of country stillness, or in a life of little event and little occupation ; then it would answer no purpose to go on to point out how pleasant it is, and how profitable : for then it would be a thing from which many of the ablest, most useful, best, and most Christian of our race are utterly and hopelessly debarred. And to talk sentimentalism about flying from the town, to take shelter in the seclusion of nature, may be fit enough for the page of the poet, but would be quite out of place in the sober sense and truthful reality of a Christian discourse. Most men have it not in their power to do so : and what would become of the arts of life if all Christian men were to betake themselves to the monastic retirement ? We shall be better able to judge, however, how far this quiet spoken of in our text is within the reach of men in general,

when we have seen what are its characteristics,— what sort of thing it is.

And we may first remark of it negatively, that when St. Paul bids us ‘study to be quiet,’ he does not at all mean that we are just to sit still and do nothing. He does not at all mean that we are to spend our days in idleness and apathy, without energetic exertion, without feeling, without sense,— quiet as a log of wood is, still as a stone. St. Paul was the very last man, and Christianity is the very last religion, to turn men into insensate and do-nothing lumps of clay. The same hand that wrote our text, wrote also those words which so completely sketch out a Christian man’s ‘life in earnest’: ‘Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.’ No, my brethren, the busiest and most industrious man is oftentimes the quietest; and the idlest man the noisiest, the most unquiet, the one who knows least of the equable calm of spirit which St. Paul desired his friends might enjoy. But with this caution as to what ‘to be quiet’ *is not*, let us consider now what it *is*.

And in the first place, a quiet spirit, we take it, means one which is the very opposite of being quarrelsome and contentious. It implies that a man loves peace and goodwill among his neighbours:

that he hates brawling and strife : that he is never ready to pick a quarrel, or hasty to take offence where none is meant. It implies that he has nothing of that loud boisterous overbearing manner we sometimes have seen : that he has a respectful way of addressing both his inferiors and his superiors : that he can direct his workpeople what to do without swearing at them : that he can speak to the poorest without bullying, and that he is ready to accord to those above him that proper measure of respect which is their due. It implies that a man is not to be one of those firebrands, those wasps and hornets of society, who are never content but when they are in the midst of fighting ; and whose very life would stagnate if they had to live in peace. It implies that a man is to be no agitator, either political or religious : not a demagogue, not a sower of sedition, not a mischief-maker, not a tale-bearer, not an unruly subject, not a despiser of law and authority, not a tyrant to the weak and a sycophant to the strong. All this St. Paul meant us to understand that we ought, and ought not to be, when he bade us ‘study to be quiet.’

Then again, we take it, when the Apostle advised us to be so, he meant that we should be

steady and orderly in fulfilling our daily duties. He meant that we should not be always flying off to something new, something unusual ; and that we should not be making tremendous exertions at one time, and then idling our time away. On the contrary, day after day, in a quiet, orderly, methodical manner, we should do the work which God has given us to do : not inter-meddling with things which do not concern us ; but going stedfastly on, neglecting nothing we ought to do, however small ; and doing everything as though the daily task were measured out to us by the hand of our Blessed Saviour himself. *That*, we understand it, is what is meant by 'studying to be quiet.' Not flightiness, not inconstancy, not extravagance, not officiousness : but the calm, regular working the work that God has set us, while it is called To-day.

And further, as we understand it, when St. Paul advises us to 'study to be quiet,' he implies that we should cultivate a spirit, the very opposite of anything like grumbling and discontent. It is not only a very silly thing, but a very unchristian thing, to be always dissatisfied with our lot : and judging from what little opportunity of observing we have had, we believe that those people who are always complaining and repining in one situation, would

complain and repine in any situation whatever. It shows a sad forgetfulness of how little we deserve from God, of the real and substantial woes of multitudes around us, of the life of sorrow which our Saviour led, of God's sovereign appointment of all things, if we are ever ready to forget our great blessings and to dwell on our little pains and cares.

And yet further, when St. Paul bids us 'study to be quiet,' he no doubt means that we are to endeavour, so far as may be, to avoid that over-excitement, that feverish bustle, that breathless chase, in which men in this age are so ready to be involved, if they give their minds too much to the interests and affairs of this world. Unless we are very much on our guard, unless we constantly seek God's Spirit to keep time and eternity in their right places in our view, how easily we get drawn (as it were) into the vortex, go with the crowd and the current, and at last find ourselves as eager and as worldly of heart as any man who avows no interest in any other world! Ah my friends, if any person gets so intensely bent upon his business, that the thought of it makes his morning devotions cold and heartless, and that during all the day he has not an idea beyond it, and that at

night he feels so jaded that he has neither heart nor strength for prayer,—if all this goes on month after month and year after year,—what will the effect be upon the permanent temper of his soul? Will not all this worldly care choke the good seed: will not the result of all this be, that all spiritual thoughts and feelings will be (so to speak) crowded out of the heart in which they can find no room? Far be it from us to represent in any way that Christianity would have us grow quite indifferent to all worldly things, and feel no interest in them at all. Not by any means: what is commanded is that we should ‘seek *first* the Kingdom of God and his righteousness’: that we should give time and eternity the relative degrees of interest and regard to which each is entitled: and that, although very often, and for long periods of time too, we may be obliged to concentrate our thoughts and attention on the business of this world, we should yet all the while live as it were in a pervading atmosphere of the sense and conviction, that in the comparison, ‘All on earth is shadow, all beyond is substance.’ Let us then ‘study,’—for oh! it requires study, and prayer, and the aid of God’s Spirit, ‘to be quiet.’ And as it is a sad sight, and a stumbling-block to many, to find a

man professing to be religious, who is just as keen, and eager, and excited, about worldly success, as any merely worldly man : so it is a gladsome and beautiful sight, and a demonstrative proof of the reality of Christian feeling at the heart, to see a Christian man giving this world its just degree of regard and no more : interested, but not over-excited ; calm, yet not indifferent ; thankful for success, yet not broken down by disappointment ; resigned, sober-minded, equal-tempered, *quiet* !

And here we may also suggest that the probability even of worldly success is diminished by over-excitement in the pursuit of it. We cannot do ourselves justice when we get nervous and frightened. Some of you will remember how that most amiable of men and best of missionaries, Henry Martyn, tells us that when going in to that examination from which he came out the first man in his University in his year, he felt, as most do, exceedingly nervous and excited, and found his mind in such a state that he felt he could not do himself justice. But suddenly, as by a ray of heavenly light, he was enabled to see the case as it would look in Eternity : he remembered, when regarded in *that* way, how little a thing it was to be Senior Wrangler : and his mind became quiet,

and his powers unembarrassed: he gained that high distinction very much because he did not mind so very overwhelmingly whether it were won or lost.

Let me suggest to you, as another thing which is implied in the Apostle's advice that we 'study to be quiet'; that we should seek to avoid over-carefulness and over-anxiety about our worldly concerns. Earthly care there must be, while we remain on earth: but it shews want of faith in that kind God whose name is Jehovah-Jireh, 'The Lord will provide,' if we allow ourselves to be crushed down and desponding and overwhelmed as many Christians of over-anxious dispositions oftentimes are. Let us remember that it is a snare of the great Adversary, to fill us with disquiet as to what may be coming, as to how we are to manage, as to the thousand little concerns of daily domestic life. 'I would have you without carefulness,' said the Apostle: for he knew how over-carefulness frets and wears away the fine mechanism of the soul, how it sours the temper, and hardens the heart, how the Christian graces grow stunted or die in 'care's unthankful gloom.' Oh that we had the earnest faith that would enable us to obey our gracious Saviour's command, 'Be careful for no-

thing!’ Oh that we could roll all our cares upon God, who ‘careth for us’! I know, indeed, that in regard to all this, it is very much a matter of individual disposition. Some people are naturally of an anxious and excitable disposition, ready to anticipate evil rather than good: while others are by nature sanguine, unanxious, heedless of the future. The right habit lies between the two. There is something irrational in the levity and recklessness which never look forward, but thoughtlessly enjoy the present: and there is something to be contended against as a temptation, in the disposition to look too far onward, to get easily and greatly disquieted, to get bowed down with care, and live in a ceaseless fever of anxiety and dread. Let us, oh let us, leave ourselves in the kind hands of Jehovah-Jireh: let us trust to the promise, ‘As thy days, so shall thy strength be’: let us remember that the evil we dread may never come; that the dark cloud into which we fear to enter, may break and shew the blue heaven above us when we are fairly under it: that ways of escape may appear from the peril; and that divine grace may strengthen wonderfully to bear up under the worst: and so let us keep an unanxious spirit;—let us be ‘without carefulness’;—let us believe

that 'The Lord will provide';—let us 'study to be quiet!'

We might mention lastly, as something which seems to us included in the idea of Christian quiet; something to be studied and to be prayed for; evenness and equanimity of temper, as opposed to peevishness, to fretfulness, to sudden outbursts of passion. That elevation and depression of spirits to which many are subject, should perhaps be regarded as properly disease: but even disease, when of the mind, should be conscientiously struggled with; and may be in a good degree overcome by pains and prayer. And we cannot regard as other than guilty, those ebullitions of ill-temper, which disfigure the profession of many Christians in whom there yet as we would hope is found the root of the matter;—which make it unpleasant to live under the same roof with them; and which embitter their own lives as well as the lives of all about them,—their children, their servants, even their visitors and neighbours. No doubt there is much here of natural idiosyncrasy: some people have by nature a sweet and gentle temper: but there is much more due to early indulgence, want of restraint and self-denial. And if it was the boast even of ancient philosophy, with

all its errors and follies, that it could make a man naturally impatient and imperious, mild and gentle ; surely the blessed working of the Holy Spirit will not be in vain on that soul which honestly prays for it and seeks it to aid in resisting the easily-besetting sin.

Thus, then, we have pointed out some of the things which we believe St. Paul desired the Thessalonians should attain to, when he bade them 'study to be quiet.' A spirit not idle and slothful ; but peaceable and gentle : steady and orderly : not grumbling and complaining : not over-excited and eager in the pursuit of earthly things : not over-careful and anxious : not peevish, fretful, or outrageous : such was the spirit which the Apostle wished to see. And as for the reasons which led him to wish for it in his friends at Thessalonica, these seem plain at a glance. We do not certainly know whether there was anything in the conduct and character of these people which made the admonition especially needful in their case ; probably there was, for St. Paul accommodated the supply to the demand : but we know this, that apart from any accidental reasons which applied at that time only and to these people only, there are good reasons, of permanent and universal force,

why all men in all ages in all lands should 'study to be quiet.'

For one thing, surely it is the happiest life. There may be morbid minds which find enjoyment in all those things which we have pointed out to you as being the opposite of 'quiet': but we say that to the soul in a healthful state,—and we recognize no soul as healthful which has not been renewed by the working of the Holy Spirit,—quiet and peacefulness make the happiest earthly lot. The mind in a healthy state must prefer peace to war: for war is lawful only as a means to peace. And we could as readily believe that a sane man would prefer dark to light, grief to joy, as restlessness and strife to peace and quiet. I can imagine, indeed, that a manly spirit may be placed in circumstances in which for the sake of truth and right, it may for the time prefer the hurricane to the calm: but this is, surely, not for the sake of the hurricane itself, but for the sure and lasting peace which it shall usher in. And even should the turmoil and the din, the rush of men, and the change of scenes and faces, have the power to charm in the days of wayward youth, surely when its feverish pulses beat no more, the enduring charm of life will be in the calm exercise of simple

virtues, and by the fireside of a quiet home. There, as the uneventful days go on, as the heart beats equably and still, the soul may have time and space to be preparing for the great Eternity : there need be no turmoil in the ear, shutting out all hearing of the quiet voices in which God speaks to us by his word and Spirit ; no breathless hurry in which the deluded soul may feel itself constrained to put off all care of the life before us to ' a more convenient season,' a season never to arrive. *There*, there shall be time for prayer, time for the Bible, time for self-examination and for solemn thought : and in that gentle leisure, out of the current of overdriven life, it shall be easier and happier, like him of old, to walk with our God. And thus, we take it, the great reason why we should ' study to be quiet,' is that a quiet life, such a life as the Apostle meant by that word, is the congenial atmosphere in which true religion makes her home. The ' fruits of the Spirit ' grow best, in a quiet regular peaceful unexcited life. They are stifled and put down in the fever of strife and contention. There can be no doubt, that in the busy world, Satan wages his most successful war. I am not sure at all, indeed, that in the sweet country place, amid flowers and trees, amid the

simple people, beside the murmuring river, shut in by the dear blue hills, it is easier to live a life above the world, and make this world a pleasant passage to glory in the next. Yet you all remember the Christian poet's words ; which would teach us so :

The calm retreat, the silent shade,
 With prayer and praise agree :
 And seem by Thy sweet bounty made,
 For those who follow Thee.

There if Thy Spirit touch the soul,
 And grace her mean abode,
 Oh, with what peace, and joy, and love,
 She communes with her God !

There like the nightingale she pours
 Her solitary lays :
 Nor asks a witness of her song,
 Nor thirsts for human praise.

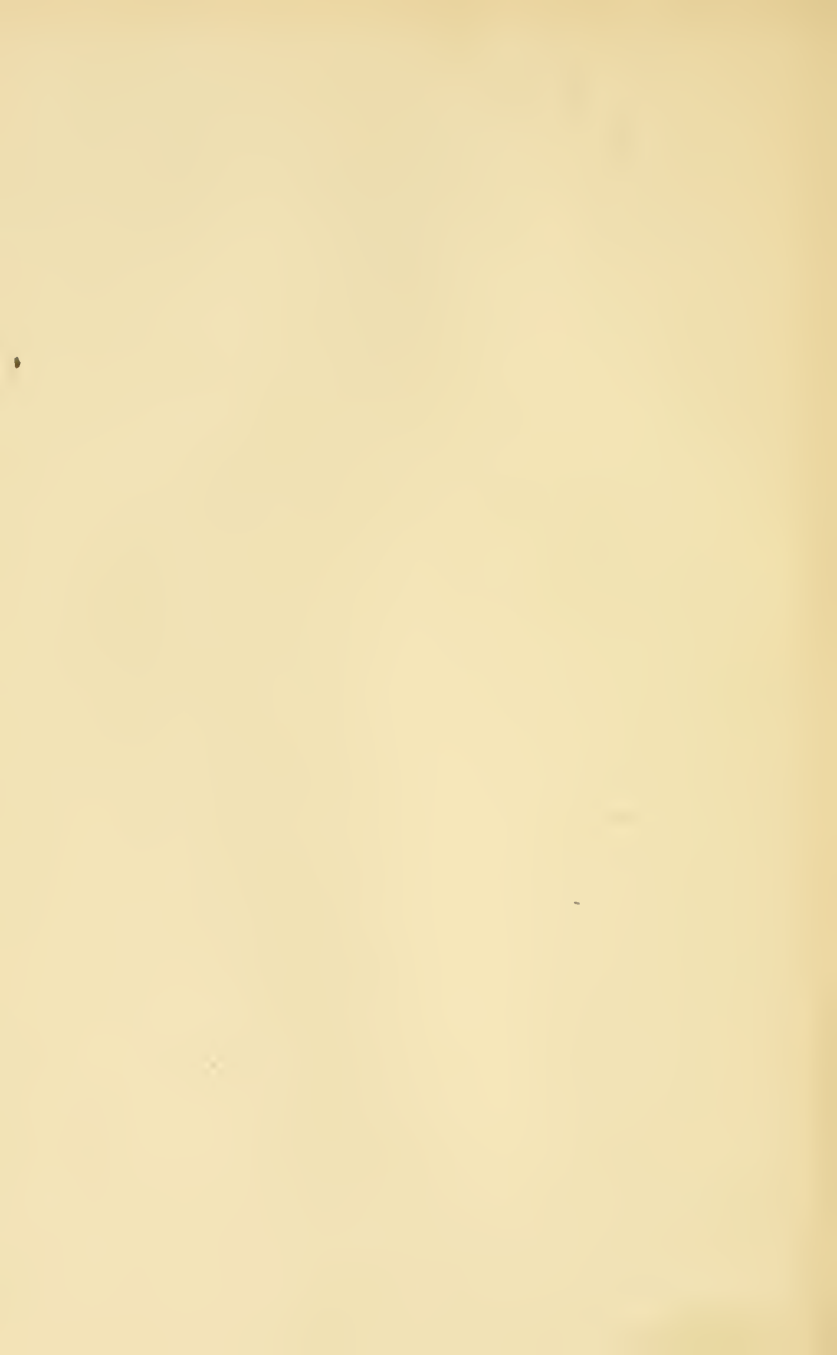
Not that in any place in this world you can hope to be wholly free from temptation from within : and not that the country is a scene of Arcadian innocence. There too there is much which is evil : over-reaching ; small and shallow craft, easily seen through : gossiping, talebearing and lying and slandering : but still there is not the appalling profligacy of great cities,—not their heartrending want and woe : comparative comfort, and what may almost be called innocence when compared with what is elsewhere found. But yet,

after all, the crowded city contains the best of the race; and not only can quiet be found in quiet scenes. As surely as the unquiet heart takes its own stormy atmosphere into the calmest summer landscape, so certainly may the meek and quiet spirit find quiet wherever it goes. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.' There may be 'central peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation': and the busiest man of business, the most bustling housewife, the most pushing and energetic, if he be a man of prayer and of God, or if she be such a woman, may have deep still peacefulness and quiet in the innermost chambers of the heart, in spite of all the stir and motion round them: even as the ocean in wildest storm is fretful and wild only on its surface, while all is calm and stirless in its azure depths. Busy and perplexed you often may be, toiling Christian man: but oh! have you not the quiet sabbath,—guard it from profane intrusion of worldly thoughts: have you not the quiet closet,—shut out the world from it: have you not the throne of grace, where you may pour out all your story in your Saviour's ear,—and should not *that* be like a nightly haven of peace wherein you may take shelter after all the blasts and buffets of the

exciting and stormy day? True, care will come, and bereavement; sorrow, and it may be strife: but even then you must still bethink you of my text: who was it that said '*Be still*, and know that I am God!' And if you ask us, ere we close, what are the means of doing as the text bids us, our answer is, There is nothing like Prayer. Therein lies the secret of soul-peacefulness. If you have indeed gone to Him who said, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest'; take all the burden of your cares and anxieties to the Throne of Mercy, and leave them there. You will not come back again with a perturbed and over-anxious spirit, after a season of hearty communion with your Maker. As you bend lowly in His presence, and speak to Him in the name of Christ: as you pour out all your heart to Him, sure that He is ready to listen, and sympathise, and help, and comfort: oh then the storm will go down, the fever will abate: the gale will sink to whispers, and the billow will murmur gently as Gennesaret's waters when their Maker said '*Be still*': and you will know again what school to go to, what Master to learn from, when you would fain obey an Apostle's kind admonition,—and '*study to be quiet.*'

XIII

FAITH AND SIGHT



XIII

*FAITH AND SIGHT*¹

‘ For we walk by faith, not by sight.’—2 COR. V. 7.

THERE are two great classes of things, in whose existence we have all, from our earliest youth, been taught to believe. And these two classes are so large and vast, that they include within themselves all things whatsoever. We cannot even imagine anything, which would not rank under one of them. All things that are, and all things that are possible, and all things that are conceivable,—may be classified under the two great heads, of the *Things which are Seen*, and the *Things which are Not Seen*. By the Things which are Seen, we understand all things of whose existence and qualities we are informed by sense,—not merely by the sense of Sight, but by any or all of our external senses. Everything that we can see and touch,—and perhaps indeed all the interests and relations

¹ St. Bernard's, Edinburgh : February 14, 1859.

which begin and end upon what we can see and touch,—all these are to be reckoned among the things that are seen. And although you may be aware that there have been men, who taught that the informations of sense are not entitled to implicit credit, and that we have no satisfactory evidence of the existence and properties of the things which we can see and touch,—still the common sense of mankind has settled *that* question: and there are very few who could seriously tell us, that they have not a clear and abiding conviction of the substantial reality of the Things and the Interests which are seen. There is no debate as to *their* number and nature. We all know perfectly what is meant by a tree, a field, a house, a street, a city, money, food, raiment, friends, family, home. No reasonable man will tell us, that day by day he does not realize strongly enough what such things are; or that he does not feel keenly enough how closely they touch him.

But when we pass over to the other great division of all possible Existence, how the case is altered! The Things which are Not Seen,—the things as to which Sense can tell us nothing,—though if Christianity be not a fable, they are a thousand-fold more important in themselves and

in their bearing upon ourselves, than all seen things put together ;—though among them is God Almighty Himself,—for He is the ‘King Eternal, Immortal, *Invisible*’ ;—though among them is a whole unseen World of endless happiness or endless woe,—and a long Eternity through which our conscious life must last ;—though among them are the greatest needs of our poor, sinful, dying nature, and that blessed Atoning Sacrifice of our merciful Redeemer through which alone all these needs can be supplied ;—though ‘ the things which are seen are temporal, and the things which are not seen are eternal ’ ;—oh how hard it is, day by day, minute by minute, to feel *their* reality, and to feel with what tremendous weight *they* concern us all !

Few men will honestly say, that they are not sufficiently impressed with their need of food and raiment : no man can say that when he is hungry he does not know that he wants food, when he is cold he does not know that he wants shelter, when he is deadly sick he does not know that he wants relief from suffering : but how many a human being is perishing of the worst disease, sin, yet never feels his need of a Saviour : how many a man has God’s wrath and curse resting upon him,

yet never knows nor cares : how many a soul is going downwards and downwards to final woe, yet does not see it or think of it ; how many a man is 'without God in the world,' yet has no sense at all of that fearful destitution !

We need not spend time here,—for we are all professing Christians,—in calling to mind some who have declared that they believed that all things that are, might be ranked under the one head of the *Things that are Seen* ; and that there are no *Things that are Not Seen* at all. Yet we may remark, that we are far from saying that such men may not have been,—even to the last wretched extent of believing that there is no God : and we are far from classifying such with the mere handful of ingenious perverts, who have extended the like scepticism to even the world of matter, and who have argued,—of course they did not really think it,—that in this universe there is Nothing,—Nothing either unseen or seen.

The common sense of mankind would say that it is pure idiotcy to deny the existence of those things which are discerned by sense : but though it be sad, dreary, despairing error, to deny the existence of the things which are not seen, still, assuredly, the evidence on which we have to

believe in their existence, is not of such a nature that to gainsay it implies practical idiotcy. It is, indeed, we firmly believe, of such nature and force that it cannot be resisted without guilt ; and that it *must* convince the soul in which there does not exist either moral or intellectual perversity. But still, it is not an evidence, direct, universal, irresistible,—like that of sense. The evidence may be as strong in its own way : but it is an entirely different kind of evidence. And St. Paul, in the text, contrasts the two. Speaking in the name of all believers,—and desiring to fix, by one strong line, the ground and the basis upon which all their life proceeds,—upon which alone it is explicable, upon which alone it is reasonable, upon which alone it is defensible,—he says, ‘We walk by faith, not by sight.’ Sight is a general name for the entire evidence of sense : the entire evidence on which we believe the things which are seen. And faith is the name of that evidence on which we believe the things which we cannot see or touch. As the Apostle says, with philosophical accuracy of language, ‘Faith is—the evidence of Things not Seen.’ And to say that the believer ‘walks by faith and not by sight,’ is simply to declare that the ‘Things which are Not Seen’ are those which weigh most with

him,—that motives and considerations which arise out of *them* act most influentially upon his mind and heart :—in short, to use inspired words which set forth at once what Christians do when they ‘walk by faith,’ and one strong reason why they do it,—‘We look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal !’

We have called to mind that there have been men, to whom the evidence on which we are asked to believe in the existence of things Unseen has appeared so insufficient, that they have refused to believe that there are such things at all. But *that* is a matter which does not concern professed Christians, as we are. We are all quite convinced that there are many things to whose existence sense does not testify,—and that these are the most important things of all. We never have seen God : yet we believe that He is. We never have seen our Blessed Redeemer : but surely we believe in Him, and trust Him, and love Him, though unseen. We never have seen the Holy Spirit : yet we trust we have felt His gracious working in our hearts. We never have looked with these eyes upon that Golden City, where the believer finds peace and

rest with his Saviour: but if we did not believe in it, how could we live!

No: what we lament, when we think of the things which are not seen, is, not that we do not believe in them; not that we are not convinced of their existence:—but that, though believing that they are, we cannot habitually feel their substantial reality, as we do the reality of those things which we can touch and see. ‘We walk by faith, not by sight’: the evidence which guides our daily Christian life, is something quite different from sense: something which to worldly minds, and even to the mind of weak believers, seems to fall far short of sense in the solid realization which it brings. ‘Seeing is believing,’ says the common adage: and does not that adage bring out the latent belief of average humanity, that sight is something stronger than faith:—that there is nothing that brings so solid a sense of reality as the material testimony of external sense?

But I appeal to your own experience: how hard we find it to feel that God Almighty is within these four walls: how little realized is the life, day by day, of those dear ones, who left your home for heaven! Yet you believe, as you have been taught from your childhood, that in the hour of

death they 'were made perfect in holiness, and did immediately pass into glory'; but you cannot commonly feel that they are not lost to you, that they are living yet,—you cannot day by day think what they are perhaps saying and doing, as you might and would if they were only beyond the Atlantic, and not beyond the grave. Something of the old heathen notion clings to us, of a land of unreality, peopled by glimmering shades: the unknown land beyond death seems somehow all vague and dim; and the beings who dwell there like shadows.

We are such stuff,
As dreams are made of; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

Now, surely it is a thing of momentous concern, that we should distinguish between the dimness and imperfection which God for wise purposes has attached to that which is 'the evidence of things not seen,'—and any vagueness or unreality about these 'things not seen' themselves.

It is very natural for us to think, that if things unseen appear to us less substantial than things seen, this is because they are in truth less substantial. The ancient Greeks, and the Scandinavians of the middle ages, knew that they had in their own minds but very shadowy and indistinct impres-

sions of an unseen world : and, accordingly, they, naturally enough, concluded that this unseen world was itself a very shadowy and indistinct thing.

And we are ready to fall into the selfsame error. We transfer the comparative vagueness which is in the instrument whereby things not seen are discerned, from the instrument to the things not seen. We find it hard to feel that *they* are stupendous, solid realities, though we discern them but faintly and far away.

You do not fancy that the great mountain which rises a few miles from your door has lost its solidity, though on a misty day of fog and haze it looks unsubstantial as a cloud. The mountain, you know, remains the same : and all the difference is in the medium through which you view it.

And in this respect, the text appears to suggest a valuable lesson to us. Let us not forget, that 'we walk by faith, and not by sight' : let us not expect the evidence of faith to afford us a similar kind of assurance to that which we derive from sight. It was never meant to afford it. It can give us a strong evidence,—a convincing evidence,—an evidence on which we may with comfort and hope live and die : but you are asking too much of faith if you ask it to match the solid certainty, irresistible

practically by the most obstinate perversity, which is afforded by sense and sight.

We are here in a world of discipline : and a great part of the discipline by which we are being formed and tempered, comes of the fact that in this world, as regards our most important interests, we must walk and live by faith. It is the manifest intention of the Almighty that the grand spiritual realities of the universe, the 'things which are not seen,' should not be forced upon those who do not choose to see them : it is God's purpose that they should be clear enough for the practical guidance of the earnest and truth-loving soul,—and capable of supplying motives which are sufficient, but not overwhelming, not totally irresistible except by pure insanity.

The very conception of a state of discipline is that of a state in which it shall be possible for a sane being to go either wrong or right.

We are far from saying that in this world we are placed in such a state of probationary trial as shall by its result decide our eternal destiny for good on the ground of any well-doing and well-deserving of our own. But every thinking being must see that there is a certain sense in which we in this world have to choose between life and death,

right and wrong, truth and falsehood, good and evil : and there is no truth to which we hold with more resolute conviction, than that every human soul that shall be finally condemned and lost, will know in the inmost depth of its consciousness that the fault was entirely its own:—that is to say, will sorrowfully yet undoubtingly admit the justice of its doom, which it could *not do* unless the fault were entirely its own.

Now, if the things which are not seen should glare upon us in their tremendous reality,—if they forced themselves upon our notice and our consciousness as pain and pressure and hunger force themselves upon our physical nature,—if it were strictly impossible to help realizing spiritual realities,—if, as regards even the things which are now unseen, we ‘walked by sight’ and sense,—if the Almighty broke through the still seclusion in which He dwells unseen, and gave Himself to our sight,—if the flames of hell glared lurid and awful in the path of the man advancing to some deed of sin,—if the great Adversary instead of stealing into the heart in the guise of some soft blandishing temptation, were never suffered to approach us save visibly in his own lightning-blasted shape and form,—*then* this world would be no state of trial, no state of

discipline: then there would be no room left for responsibility: then disobedience would become impossible,—and with it of course obedience would become impossible too. It is the working of machinery, not the acting of rational and accountable creatures, when there is but one way to choose, for all but the plainly mad.

Why, if in regard to the things which are now unseen, we 'walked by sight,'—if sense told us of them,—there would be no more of a moral element in a man's turning to Jesus and believing in Him,—than there is now in a man's seeking food when he is starving, or warmth when he is perishing from cold. No doubt,—no doubt at all,—the starving man does not need food half so much, as every poor sinner needs a share in Christ's great salvation: but then though we all know this and acknowledge it, it is yet possible to forget it: and alas! what numbers do! The starving man cannot forget that he needs food: he cannot overlook that fact: it is pressed upon him so persistently that he cannot possibly waken up to the remembrance of it just when he is dying of inanition: but the sinner may quite forget that he needs pardon through Christ's blood;—he may entirely overlook that great fact;—he may waken up to the over-

whelming conviction of it when it is too late ;—he may wonder how he ever could have been so utterly reckless as he has been,—but not till he is on a fevered dying bed, not till he lifts up his eyes in woe.

But, now that we have admitted that in regard to the most solemn, and awful, and personally important things in all this universe, we must 'walk by faith and not by sight': now that we have admitted that this just means that in regard to the things that concern us most, we must be content to put up with an evidence far less glaring, far less constant and persistent, far more capable of being entirely overlooked and forgotten, than that of sense : now that we have admitted that it appears to be God's purpose and intention that we are to have nothing more than this comparatively weak and oblivious evidence of faith in regard to things unseen : we go on to say that even in the view of all this, we dare not accuse the Almighty of unkindness and injustice,—we dare not say that He has designedly set us at a disadvantage,—because in giving us the evidence of faith as regards things unseen, He has given us amply sufficient to procure our salvation: He has given us all the evidence of which, by the make of

this universe, things unseen possibly admit ; He has given us as much evidence as He *could* have given without utterly destroying the character of this life as a state of trial, and converting us from responsible creatures into mere machines.

My brethren, truly we must 'walk by faith' : truly as concerns our eternal wellbeing we must be actuated by what we believe rather than by what we see : true it is that no strain of vision can shew us the Invisible God, or our own deathless souls : true it is that nowhere on this earth that the blue sky bends over, can we catch a glimpse of the happy region where the dead in Jesus go : true it is that the thoughts of eternity and immortality never entered these minds through the avenue of sense. But is there any man who believes in Christianity who will dare to say that he does not believe enough to save him,—what would save him if he acted upon it,—what ought to compel him to act upon it ?

Do you not believe,—does not Faith tell you *this*,—that beyond the grave there spreads an unseen world,—a world in which there are but the two alternatives of bliss and woe : do you not believe that into that world you must enter when you die, and live *there* in bliss or woe for ever : do

you not believe that Jesus came into this world to seek and save the lost, and that you have but to cast yourself simply upon Him, and to seek the grace of the Blessed Spirit, and you gain the title and the meetness to eternal bliss : do you not believe that to the same narrow house where you have known your neighbours go, you must go yourself ; that *you* too must feel the last pulse flutter, and all dear faces and objects grow dim and dark :—that *you* too must have the dull clod cast upon you, and the green turf wave above your breast, and the daisies grow over you :— that *you* too must launch away into that untrodden world, into the presence of Almighty God, and feel His keen eye resting upon you, and hear His voice pronounce your doom : and will you say that this is not enough to lead you heartily to go to Jesus, and earnestly to seek that good part in Him which will make you safe and happy whether amid things seen or things unseen ?

Or will you say that all that might save you if you saw it, but that you only believe it and therefore it will not suffice ?

Only believe it ! Do you not act, day by day, in regard to the matters that as to this world concern you most nearly, just on what you believe ?

You only believe that the food which is set before you is not poisoned ; yet you partake of it without fear. You only believe that the vessel in which you embark to cross the wild Atlantic, is stout and seaworthy ; *you* never scrutinised its thousands of rivets, each one of which if unfaithful might let in death : yet you embark in it without fear. You only believe that the medicine which is brought you for your sick child is such as may with the kind God's blessing take the sickness away : *you* could not read the crabbed Latin of the prescription : *you* could not estimate the skill and judgment of the physician who drew it out ; or the degree of attention which he had given to this particular case : *you* do not know what amount of experience, knowledge, and accuracy were possessed by the man who prepared the medicine,—whether he may not have taken one powder for another, or sent you the draught intended for quite another disease : yet you give the medicine to the little sufferer ; and soon in the restoration of health and cheerfulness you reap the reward of having in this matter 'walked by faith.'

'We walk by faith, not by sight,' says the Apostle : may we not extend the statement to the things which are seen, no less than to those

which are unseen? Is it not true, that in a hundred matters in which we might if we chose it walk by sight, we choose to act by faith,—to be guided by what we believe, but what we never have seen? And is it a hardship, to be asked to do the self-same thing in regard to realities as to which, so far as we can understand it, the evidence of sense is an impossibility,—but faith rests upon grounds as firm as ever were yielded by sense? Why, brethren, it is our belief in every case that directs our conduct: wherefore do you act on the evidence of sense, but because you believe that evidence,—because seeing is believing? But though seeing is believing, there are other things which with reasonable beings are believing too. Indubitable testimony is believing: irresistible argument is believing: the witness of your own heart and consciousness is believing: and that belief, which is religious faith, has its broad foundation upon all of these. You are not asked to believe without amply sufficient reason: you are commanded, indeed, to be ready always to render a reason for your faith and hope: but once you *do* believe, is it not your duty as a reasonable being to act upon that belief,—to walk by faith, though you have not sight? Act then, brethren,

as if you believed in a God and a Redeemer, in a heaven and a hell, in a sanctifying Spirit and a malignant Adversary. You *do* believe in all these : well, then, act as if you did : so shall you 'walk by faith' ;—so shall you 'live by faith' ;—so shall you 'believe and live.'

And specially, when we think of the unseen world, let us pray and labour to realize that which we believe. Let us seek to feel that it is a solid substantial world that spreads beyond the grave,—not a world of shadow, of airy fancy, of intangible essence. No man will heartily remove his affections from the 'dear green earth,' from the 'warm precincts of the cheerful clay,'—if all you can show him beyond the shadow of death be but some vague, misty, undefined, impalpable scene, with nothing upon which human hope and longing can fasten. But it is not so. It is a real 'country' that hath been sought, since time's beginning, by the 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth.' What though our dear ones have left us,—what though 'our paths be in the fields we know,' and 'theirs in undiscovered lands,'—still those shores are real and substantial as these we tread,—shores where there are trees always green, sapphire skies, and sparkling rivers,—shores whereon, when death has

been quite swallowed up in victory at last, we may hope to clasp hands as warm as ever gave their hearty pressure here. 'On the low dark verge of life,' there is the 'twilight of eternal day': and *that* day shines, though we see them not, on realms as real as ever were made by earthly rock, and wood, and river. No doubt, better things are *there* than any external beauty: perfect holiness, and the constant presence of Christ: but let it not be fancied that these are not to be found save in a locality too vague for human wish and hope. 'We walk by faith, not by sight': but we walk in faith of *that* which we hope one day to see. And walking in faith here, we look for better things hereafter: according to the Redeemer's gracious promise, 'They shall *walk* with Me in white, for they are worthy.'

XIV

ON THE MOUNT OF COMMUNION

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SITTING by the Communion Table in a church which stands pretty far to the North in Scotland; and where, through pleasant associations, the present writer feels himself very much at home. It may prevent misapprehension, should one add that the sacred edifice stands in a conspicuous spot of the famous city of Aberdeen. There one has thought of the vanity of human wishes. A true poet¹ rests in the churchyard, who, in pathetic lines often quoted, stated that he desired that his mortal part should be laid on a breezy hill, and that a brook should murmur by his grave. But when they inquired of him at the last whether he would indeed be carried to the spot indicated (which was known), the weary and heart-broken man said, Oh no; the nearest place. And curiously, a blackened wall rises close

¹ Beattie.

to the west end of the narrow bed : so close that at sunset the grave must be in shadow. The wish conveyed in the last line can never come true. Yet it was a harmless wish ; and it is expressed touchingly. 'And many an evening sun shine sweetly on my grave.'

The beautiful church was flooded with joyful sound. It is indeed one of the most uplifting of our parish churches. But the outstanding thing that morning was the crowded congregation. It was a Communion Sunday : and before the day was over, twelve hundred and sixty pilgrims were to receive under this roof what would help them on their way : help them, by God's good blessing, as nothing else can in all this world. There was a grand organ : a powerful and cultured choir. Which things are good, I think. But better still, I am quite sure, the multitude of voices and hearts which seemed lifted up together.

As two lines of that opening psalm were sung, my eye fell upon an aged woman near me. The lines were, 'This is the day God made, in it we'll joy triumphantly.' And Francis Rous, the Englishman who wrote 'the Scotch Psalms,' has put the fact a little more strongly than the prose version gives it. Everybody knows 'This is the

day which the Lord hath made : we will rejoice and be glad in it.' The *triumphantly* may be implied, but it is not quite expressed.

She was a poor old woman : the thin, worn raiment bespoke decent poverty. And she was quite alone. People who have served in my vocation for as long as I have, know things at first sight. Her husband was dead, and her children were scattered. It was a thin, faded face : she was a good deal beyond the three-score and ten ; and it was a trembling, quavering voice that caught my ear in the strange words ' We'll joy triumphantly.' It was touching above measure. The tears came straight to my eyes. Possibly this was very silly. Just this morning I received by post a specially spiteful attack upon my humble self, written by a woman : ah, how well I knew the reason why that abusive little document was penned ! It is forgiven, heartily, if the writer will accept forgiveness. But it condemns me, among many other things, for this capacity of natural feeling. Now all that must be put away. If that ancient and slight acquaintance is pleased in thinking she has vexed me, so let it be. But indeed she has miscalculated.

The dear old pilgrim, that Sunday morning

did not know that I, standing very near, was watching her with deep sympathy. She was thinking of the words she strove to sing, with that failing voice : and perhaps thinking of other such Sundays, left far behind. Of that I cannot be sure : and I have known really good people, of a somewhat grim and chilly type of piety, who maintained, in that peculiar fashion which we Scots folk call *teethy*, that it is extremely wrong at the Lord's Table to think of old days when friends were with us, those who have gone before us. Such reflections were 'worldly.' They were 'of the earth, earthy' : such were the words. But I recall a text which says, 'the earth hath He given to the children of men' : and I believe that there is a righteous love for what Wordsworth called 'the dear green earth,' which is to be sharply distinguished from that sinful 'cleaving to the dust,' from which the Psalmist prayed to be delivered. I thank God for whatever touches and warms the heart : and I believe that whatever does so is a means of grace in the hand of the Blessed Spirit, and is drawing us nearer to the Blessed Redeemer.

I knew perfectly that there was very little in my aged fellow-worshipper's outward lot, over

which to joy in that triumphant way. I knew, as well as if I had seen it, the pinched home. I wondered if all the children had turned out well. Or was there an aching place in the poor old heart which never could quite cease to ache, in the remembrance of one who chose death and evil, and went to shameful ruin? I remembered how the mother of a large family said to me, long ago, making mention of the one black sheep in the flock; said quietly and sorrowfully: 'That has to be.' I remembered how strange it seemed when a fine old man said, concerning a large family near to him, 'Seven sons; and not a blackguard among them!' Which indeed was a very modest way of stating the fact *there*. One really does not think of thanking God that an Archbishop is not a pickpocket. No doubt he might have been. But I went away, in thought, to the patient, pinched sufferer who looked upon life through that little *Window in Thrums*; and who, always disabled, and always overdriven by work, often said (*speaking from the heart* as ever that departed genius¹ did), 'when she had a moment to spare, that she had a terrible lot to be thankful for.'

Here let it be interjected, that when I was a

¹ Dr. Guthrie.

lad, I had the extraordinary honour to sit exactly next Mr. Ruskin, on his left hand, when he gave a renowned, most eloquent, and most crotchety lecture in Edinburgh. When he ended, he turned to me and uttered the remarkable sentence, treasured ever since, 'Did I speak loud enough?' It was my solitary interchange of words with that great man. He stated, that evening, that he had walked along Queen Street from end to end, and had counted three hundred and seventy-eight windows on one side, and two hundred and seventy-eight on the other side, all exactly like one another. I go no farther with him. But I have thought, What handsome windows, most of them: windows of the dwellings of the comparatively rich: and what big folk have looked out of them. But is there one, in all those hundreds, that is known where our language is read like the poor little window which has been touched by the hand of that true and pathetic genius, Barrie? If ever there was a book, perfect from first word to last, it is that which I have indicated. Five times have I read it through: reading it watchfully as when of old preparing for an examination. Elsewhere I will say more. But here I wish all good may follow that lovable man: and I declare, for

myself, that his delineations of homely Scottish life are not second to Sir Walter's.

I am wandering about, the critical reader may observe. That intentionally. For I have returned to what is a rest to a weary person like me : after a task of very tough writing where the logical sequence of things had to be sternly regarded. And I feel at home with the people I am writing for, to-day. That is, with by far the most of them.

One thinks, sometimes, with incredible rapidity. All that is written here, and more, passed through my mind as I heard the voice and looked at the face, unheard and unseen till now. Perhaps she had recently met a knock-down blow, falling on head and heart. Circumstances, not to be named here, made me think of that. The homely tragedy of life is terrible. Did not a man in early middle age, whom I had married, go out one morning to his work in a great factory, bidding his good hard-working wife farewell, neither knowing it : did not certain awe-stricken souls come in an hour's time, and somehow manage to convey to her that he was dead? He had been drawn into some great machinery, the careful man : and so crushed and torn that the poor wife was not allowed to see him in the last resting-place. My unknown

friend had gone through much, if not through anything like that: letters and telegrams had come to her, as to you, my reader, which made this world seem to collapse under her feet, and bear her up no more. And I knew the meaning of that worn black dress. Certainly she was feeling the infirmities of age: and we, who feel that the work once done easily lies heavy now, are aware that here is something very solemn to one's self, though nothing earthly to any one else. And certainly she understood as many do not the urgency of a petition in the Lord's Prayer: and was not surprised that one in old time summed up the precious 'necessaries of life,' asking 'bread to eat and raiment to put on.' Yet there she was, alone in the congregation, trying to lift up her heart in thankfulness and something more. This was a beautiful church, in a city of heroic material: and this was a congregation which without feeling it can give a collection at which people like me can but lift up their hands in wonder. She was in a quiet corner, and dark, which is what some folk like in church. Under the shadow of the pulpit two or three chairs were set that day: and there, unseen save by one or two, the modest old pilgrim rested. She did not know: but at

least one present that morning lifted up the heart in earnest prayer that Christ, of His kindness and goodness, would supply all her need, till she came to where she would need no more. A faded smile came over the worn features, as I looked at her. Life is very hard and heavy to most people whom I know: and I am perfectly sure she was not above the average. But she was lifted above worldly trouble for that little time. I think of the ancient prayer, meant to be used by all Christian souls at a communion time: meant to be used by all because sure to suit them all: 'And now we lift up our hearts and minds on high, and give thanks unto Thee, the Lord our God.' It is not the most tried souls I have known (and I have known many), who would object that really there is nothing particular for which they ought to give thanks in that quarter. Just the other way. Like the weary woman when she could find a minute to look out of the little window in Thrums, we have, all of us, 'a terrible deal to be thankful for.' And we may not attain it, nor even get very near it: but here is the thing to aim at: 'This is the day God made, in it we'll joy triumphantly.' You have often heard it said, It is a poor heart that never

rejoices. I am very strongly convinced that if, in the closing years, we ever attain at all to what may be properly called rejoicing, it will be at the place and time which have been indicated. Of course, there is no subject in regard to which there is deeper conventional insincerity. I see, over thirty years, a line in the Contents of Macaulay's *History*: 'Rejoicings throughout England: Rejoicings in Holland.' Even as a lad, I thought to myself, How many of these millions cared a straw: or had the faintest reason to care a straw? Certainly in Holland, at any rate, that a selfish, unamiable man, of a grumpy manner, had got a great worldly lift: a man never once seen or spoken to: what is that to working people rising wearily in the dark cold morning to never-ceasing toil?

I remember, well, Mr. Froude saying to me that just once in his life he had seen on a human face what appeared to him as rapt and ecstatic devotion. It was, in every sense, very far away from Aberdeen. For indeed it was in Toledo Cathedral; which is one of the grandest structures in this world, but does not in any way belong to the Church of Scotland. The worship there is of a different type from that commonly known in Scotland, and

where we should say, in these words I have recalled, 'we lift up our hearts,' they would say *sursum corda*; which means exactly the same thing. And, I will believe, expresses exactly the same experience. Mr. Froude's old pilgrim was like mine, very poor, and burdened with infirmities and years. The day was not Sunday: it was very early in the morning: she was carrying a heavy basket of vegetables: she had brought it with her into church, and it was standing by her as she knelt on the stone floor and prayed. I have been luckier than Mr. Froude: I have seen the devout look, not to be simulated, not to be mistaken, at many communion tables from my youth until now. Possibly the great author looked for such a face, and such expression on it, as the great painters of old were wont to draw. Angelic is the word to express that. But I am at home with the quiet, subdued, reverend faces among which I have lived by far the greater part of my life: though they be even more than a little lower than the angels to look at. And not the rapt St. Agnes touches me so deeply as the worn old fellow-worshipper at Aberdeen: with the key of her little room in her pocket, and with the thought crossing her from time to time, as she worshipped, if all were safe

and right at home. And yet she feebly tried, that day, in these words, to join herself to the great communion of saints: all the Christian living, all the blessed dead: yea to angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven.

And *there*, I knew, was absolute sincerity. Not the austere sage of Chelsea would have thought to bid that aged woman to 'clear her mind of cant.' There was none to clear away. She felt herself entirely alone. And I do not believe that the strange incongruity between her pinched lot and weary look, and those words of triumphant song, ever for an instant occurred to her. It must be the right thing to say, for it expressed the thing to aim at.

Human weakness cleaves to us all, and perhaps the dear old soul sometimes thought quietly to herself that God's ways are sometimes hard to poor people. Possibly never so: any more than with that sweet young girl whom I christened twenty years ago, and laid to rest yesterday with the magnificent words of immortal hope: and who, through months of constant suffering, had ever a pleasant smile to welcome one, and never a complaining word. Ever the most tried bear trial most beautifully. Yet one wondered if amid the

never-ceasing worries of the day, all the anxious cares about innumerable little things (for it makes all the difference when 'money is no object'), that unknown friend so well remembered kept the level at which I beheld her. There is a text which very frequently crosses some minds: 'It was too painful for me: Until I went into the sanctuary of God!'

Ay, quite different *there* (as was said in Ayrshire when I was a little boy): 'upon the Mount of Ordinances!' And I will say, with great firmness, that I *know* it is in the experience of many, that every time they go to Holy Communion, they are lifted high above worldly trouble. It is not merely that they forget it. There is better. They remember it all, quite distinctly: and feel that it does not sting at all.

There is a well-known answer in the Catechism which reminds us how and wherefore this comes to be.

XV

CHURCH LIFE IN SCOTLAND—
RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

*CHURCH LIFE IN SCOTLAND: RETRO-SPECT AND PROSPECT*¹

RIGHT REVEREND AND RIGHT HONOURABLE ;—

The time has come for the closing words, as of old. Not to-night of exhortation : for to offer that I do not presume ; and it is not needed. The work of the Church, in my experience, tends in these days to be done with a feverish earnestness, by most. Not of what may be called the second-plane work of the Church : the work of the engine after the primary effort of keeping itself in energetic motion has been successfully made ; the Church's Missions and Schemes : for all details of these have been spread out before you during our meetings by experts ; and their cause has been urged by the most competent men in our vocation. Nor am I to venture on political prophecy or warning. For though we know whence the storm may come, and

¹ Delivered at the close of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, on Monday, June 2, 1890.

though our hearts must needs be sometimes anxious for the venerable Institution which has mainly made Scotland what Scotland is, I turn instinctively away from strife, present or to come ; as knowing how well and thoroughly our defence will be undertaken (when the day comes) by brave and strong men whom God has called to such a task by making them magnificently fit for it. Rather I purpose to offer you some kindly words of things much in our minds and hearts : of dear old ways of the Church ; and of the growth and tendencies of Church life in these last days. Turning away from controversy, I desire to keep to our real life : which I understand and know ; and which touches nearly.

The days lengthened, as of old. There was parish work, and home care : and May at length brought us here. The time has gone over, not without the occasional conflict of opinion, expressed with a keen ability : but now we reach the solemn end, which has so touched many of us heretofore. All contentious voices have ceased. And there remains only this needful parting word ; in speaking which every right-minded man must remember that it cannot be replied to here ; and must endeavour so to speak that, in the main, we may all be able kindly to assent to what is spoken.

It has been the use of all who have been placed in this Chair, to express their thanks to this Venerable House for the high honour conferred upon them. It is indeed a high honour to be called to this Chair with the general approval of one's Fathers and Brethren. And no words that I can find could express my sense of the extraordinary kindness with which my nomination was received by very many : a thing never to be forgot : and a warm tie where the tie was warmest already. All the more was this so, because like my predecessor Robert Blair, minister of St. Andrews two hundred and fifty years since, I had ever felt as if I ' could do more good among my Flock than in the Assembly ' : and while thankful that we have among us men whose vocation is to serve the Church in her Courts, lesser and greater, I have been mainly a preacher and a pastor, a hard-working parish minister like most of my honoured brethren ; and so am here as, in a humble sense, the representative of that quiet earnest work from week to week, the Sundays coming back so startlingly fast, which I venture to think the Church's mainstay. All the more, too, that I have taken a share in work which does not yet commend itself to every one of us. I know there are those who do not wholly approve

the *Scottish Hymnal*, wide as the acceptance of that book has been : still less, the *Book of Common Order*. But though there be these lesser divergences, I know there is a far wider field where I am in perfect and heartfelt sympathy with every loyal son of the Kirk. And I know how kindly my brethren interpret the methods of ministers faithfully seeking the good of the Church, even in exceptional ways. Your placing one in this chair does not mean that all of you assent to all his views and methods. But it *does* mean your belief in his honesty and faithfulness ; and in his heartfelt desire to serve the Church of our fathers to his level best.

Twelve years ago, many of us heard our dear and never-forgotten friend Principal Tulloch say, in his closing address, that he was the first moderator who had not finished his studies till after the disastrous '43. But now, so does time go on, a younger generation is here. And the office has been held for the first time by one who at that time had not even entered the University : and by one ordained in the second half of the century : in one of the closing months of '51. Yet even the gathering of the storm, for years before, was in young memories. I remember, vividly, a good minister saying in my father's manse, when I was

a little boy, that he would not be surprised though the result of all this controversy should be that the Church was rent asunder. All held up their hands in wonder. Such a thing was inconceivable. Ah, such a thing was to be. And the sad story is an old one now.

Times without number, since I was a youth, I have sat down at the accustomed table to write what, in God's Election, found many readers, while as good or better did not : and never anywhere have I found kindlier welcome than when, with a somewhat wearied pen, I came home to address oftentimes through our own Parish Magazine the reticent people of our own Communion. I have no more prized possession than the pathetic letters of very many unknown friends, each a kindly Scot. But it is very new and strange, after all these years, to address thus formally so many brethren set in places of anxious trust, and tried in divers ways I know so well. When first, ages ago, a member of Assembly, not a thing is so vividly remembered as how one looked along the rows of men, each one placed in this life where good sense and right feeling are just as much needed as they can be in any human vocation ; and thought how if the more outstanding, and the less outstanding too,

would each just tell one exactly how he does his work! To really know the methods of any one hard-working soul,—the actual way and feeling in which the day's work is done,—would be profoundly interesting and helpful. But, with a certain pathetic pudency, men keep their little ways to themselves. Then, specially at the beginning, much of the duty of the ministry is done under a heavy strain upon brain and heart: a strain which no worthy man would wish ever to wholly cease: the conduct of God's public worship must never be taken lightly. But, thirty years since, over all the land, and even yet in various places, that strain has been intensified to a breaking pitch by requirements which could add nothing to the edification of the flock, or to the beauty of holiness in the house of prayer. And yet, with it all, the plain church was the centre of all the interest of life. It was touching to hear a minister of the older generation, asked where he had been ministering on Sunday, reply *At Home*. That meant in his own pulpit, at his own communion-table, in his own church. And many of us have never felt so much at home as there. Not in Church Courts, where, even in such as the brotherly and beloved Presbytery which ordained me, there

must needs be sharp and lawyer-like ways that seemed just a little inconsistent with our holiest services and sacraments. Not even in this Chair, which your brotherly sympathy has made so pleasant and easy (for we come to the battle-field, and the enemy we were afraid of is not there): but rather sitting by the little fireside under a cottage roof, learning from some tried and aged pilgrim twenty times more and better than we ever taught him or her, and going away richer and stronger for such a one's solemn blessing: rather in the least æsthetic kirk of Kyle, where you learnt that the grand thing about a church is the living congregation: where the fragrance of the July clover came through the opened windows, and the air was freshened with sweet herbs: where a simple Gospel was preached, and neither preacher nor hearer had ever doubted: and where better praise by far than that chilly Jubilee orchestra in Westminster went up in *O God of Bethel*.

We have all worked, hard, to serve the Church, Fathers and Brethren: None harder, none better, than our quiet country ministers. Such as talk of the abounding leisure of a rural charge, surely forget that to prepare a sermon, to one's best, for a small congregation, costs exactly as much time and

pains as to prepare a sermon for a large congregation. Likewise that if you are resolved that your congregation shall listen with fixed attention to every word of the sermon (and you *must* be so resolved if you are a preacher), it is a far harder thing to write a sermon, which shall be followed with the audible hush you all know, in a country church, than to write one which shall hold that unmistakable grip of a city congregation. And if pastoral work be done as it ought to be : if the minister makes his presence felt in every corner of the parish : the eight miles which part some sick-bed from the manse many times, make that one continually-repeated visit cost as much wear as to visit ten sick in the close proximity of the town. I do not deny that there are compensations, very real to some men. Some will never forget what it was to ride up the parish on such duty : to pass out from the thick woods into bare and lonely tracts : where, ten miles from home, one would dismount from one's horse, and sit down on a grey stone by the wayside, and look for an hour at the heather at one's feet, and at the sweeps of purple moorland far away. But I must not recall such pictures, or I should never be done ; they are too touching and dear. Only let me say to my

brothers how well I understand the life. *Et in Arcadiâ ego.* I was once a Country Parson. And in such peaceful charges, withdrawn from the temptations as well as from the stimulus of the crowded congregations of the great city, you may find some of our most learned, devout, and cultured ministers. If ever the miserable blight of Disestablishment should befall, one of its sorest results would be the loss of such men : men for whom the Church is beyond calculation richer, men who hold the highest level of the respect of rich and poor around them : though possibly they never were endowed with the gifts of popular oratory which can hold a crowd of thousands ; or, just as likely, never having been called upon to do such work (which no doubt is very grand work), have never had powers developed which might have ranked them high as any of you. I fancy there is no more famous line in Sir Henry Taylor's famous Play, than that which assures us that 'The world knows nothing of its greatest men.' That may be, or not. But I am perfectly sure the Church knows little of many of her best men. And I am thinking not merely of devout learning, content to prosper in the shade : Through the press, *that* can now find its access to the cultured world. I am thinking of

men with great makings in them : with the potency of the most charming eloquence : but they never were called upon, never spurred to their utmost exertion : or circumstances held them down, circumstances in which no mortal could be orator or poet : and so the undeveloped capacity year by year dwindled : till you could but think of them, old and gray, as men of whom incomparably more might have been made, churchmen who never got their due. Let me say too (and the most successful among you know it best), that men need the fostering warmth of encouragement to bring out what is in them. And to some, that genial sunshine never comes. It is not true, unless in some very non-natural sense, that *everything comes to him who knows how to wait for it*. No, not any more than that *a man makes his own luck* : that favourite axiom of the wonderfully-successful. Six-and-twenty years since, I was sent by the Home Mission Committee along with my dear and honoured friend Dr. Nicholson of St. Stephen's to visit various struggling chapels. We came to one where was a poor brother, well-advanced in years, older than either of us, who was broken down into utter failure by the environment : who had quite lost heart. In those days Dr. Nicholson and I

ministered in two Edinburgh churches where the sun shone very warmly upon us, by God's goodness. Coming away from witnessing a painful squabble in that poor chapel, I could not but say to my friend, just as honoured and useful a man as was then in the Church, *Do you think you or I should have done a bit better there?* I never forget the sorrowful face with which his answer came: *No, we should not!*

The City, after all, with all anxieties, overwork, nervous strain, has both the best and the worst of the Race: and some of us are humbly thankful that courage was given us to face its ceaseless wear. But it is you who minister in beautiful country parishes who hold the prizes of the Church. Perhaps it is the Mirage, when one looks back: but one's own country parish, and far more one's Father's, in these latter days show like Paradise. Every Sunday, with its crowded church and its uplifting praise and its quiet evening of perfect peace: and far more, the unutterable sanctity and hush of the old Communion, when anxious souls did of a surety go up to the Mount of Ordinances, and found all they hoped there: the white-haired Elders,—we have the best of Elders yet, but oh, those saints departed!—then

the setting the face with fresh heart to the way : ah, there was something to be said for those rarely-coming Communion, though doubtless the balance of reason is all on the other side. One sees the snow bending the evergreens in Winter round the manse : the roses covering the house in July : the blossoming apple-trees in the garden : the hawthorn in glory making the countryside fragrant : the atmosphere of those departed days comes back, and old faces come life-like to us from where they went, long ago. Everything that is good in us, Fathers and Brethren, is a link to our Church. Everything good in us, under God's grace, we owe to the Church, and to the Children. You will pardon it, I know, in a Son of the Manse ; but my heart flies to my head at the mention of the old ways of the Kirk : and it will be so till heart and head turn cold together.

We know well, most of us, the ways of other Communion, and we feel their charm : notably the half-inspired beauty and felicity of the prayers of the greatest of National Churches, so near us, yet in sorrowful truth so far from us. But we come back, with a warm heart, the warmer for absence, to the Church of our fathers. That, after all, is to come Home. She is the Mother that took

us in her arms in our Baptism. She has fed and comforted us, all our days, at the Holy Table. And with wise restoration of the grand words of Christian hope, she will lay us in our grave.

It is the way, with the outer world, to say that ours is a quiet unanxious life, that glides away in a singular freedom from the buffets of the terrible struggle for existence which is all around us. And, God be thanked, there is truth here. We are, in the main, ministers of peace: and are not very often called to meet our fellow-men in the severities of worldly business: which often develop a hardness, a rigour of the game, a cynical unconcern for others, startling and unpleasing to see. But, putting quite aside the matter of the heavy pull on nerves and heart with which our public duty is done,—and one of the greatest of living preachers once said that if he left off preaching for six Sundays he would not have courage to begin again,—the life of such as serve the Church in her ministry has its many cares. Only a sentence of what has been not less than tragic in these last years, though borne with little complaint, by husband and wife under the roof of many a country parsonage, ivy-clad or rose-entwined. To bring the income down

by something like half, while expenses tend ever to grow, means deepening lines on the once-hopeful minister's face : means a heavy heart to the faithful companion of many anxious years. And the burden tends to grow weightier as we grow less equal to the bearing it. But, even from the first, Worry has to be, even in Arcady. One has walked through the golden harvest-fields in the September sunshine with a very anxious heart and bewildered head. No one, too, ever came into close and continual contact with some hundreds of our countrymen, without meeting the necessary percentage of the wrong-headed and cantankerous. It is our duty to make crooked sticks serve. And there is such a thing as ill-luck : specially in the first inexperienced days. For the difference is vast, between skilled labour and unskilled. You used to fancy, at your first start, that you would be able to please everybody. You would be so considerate, so diligent, so modest, so kind to all, that nobody could find fault. Ah, there are those who will find fault with anything. I never heard any charge brought against a young minister with more intense bitterness, than that he was *always kneeling and praying in the vestry before service*. The Beadle and others did not approve of this.

And a warm-hearted youth set in charge of a parish is quite certain to make many mistakes at first : mistakes for which we who are old not infrequently love him the better. An extraordinarily-old head on young shoulders is not a lovable thing.

It has seemed a hard thing, ever since this generation has known the Church, that, entering the ministry, a man's university standing goes for absolutely nothing. We have no Fellowships, to which scholarship is the passport ; and from which men advance to pleasant livings in the gift of their Colleges ; the souls in the parish acquiescently accepting the minister sent them. The people of a Scotch parish never could have liked that fashion : and now Patronage is gone, and the law gives them their choice. The question is now mainly one of attractive power in the pulpit. I never knew a very eminent student go into the Church, who did not prove a good and thoughtful preacher : specially if his eminence was less in pure scholarship than in Philosophy. But I have several times known such fail utterly of being popular preachers. The *ipsissima* gift of interesting in all they said, had not been given them ; and what Sydney Smith said of literature in general is specially true of the literature of the pulpit : that

every style is good, except the tiresome. And there are physical gifts too : the sensitive nervous temperament of the orator : the powerful and pathetic voice : even the beaming face we remember, and still sometimes see. Ah, the born preacher cannot publish the first, second, and third thing which gave the unmistakable charm to his sermon. You needed the actual presence of Tulloch, of Guthrie, of Macleod. It is pleasant to remember that the most popular Scotch preacher of the last forty years was likewise the first student of his time. Nor can I say that Patronage did a whit more to foster scholarship than popular election does. All unpopular orators are not necessarily great scholars. As the rule, the brilliant student is the likeliest to be an attractive preacher too. And I have great faith in the popular judgment : if you can get at it, and keep it unaffected by irrelevant considerations. The people who are to go to a church every Sunday surely intend to get the minister who will make it pleasant and helpful to go there. They may make mistakes ; and have sometimes done so. But men must be educated up to the worthy exercise of their new privileges. And after what was substantially a Revolution, it may take many years before things right themselves. Most regrettable

scandals, degrading to the Church, have followed the introduction of the popular election of our ministers. But these cases have been exceptional. No system was ever devised by man, which had not its disadvantages. And the change had to be. It is simply a question of time, till it shall come on the other side of the Tweed too. Bishops as well as incumbents will be popularly elected, some day. The flowing tide must flow.

Looking back, as one does tenderly, on the old ways and the devout worship of the Kirk, nothing is more borne in upon us than how that dear old order has changed in these last days: say in the last thirty years: notably in the serious matter of the public worship of God. *The old order changes*, we know. That must needs be. We should like to keep things as we have come to know and love them: but that is as vain as to wish that the children should never grow older, and that nobody should ever die. And one is not thinking of lesser matters: as that good people who once never failed of being in church twice each Sunday now think they do well if they attend a morning service: or how the afternoon service, which was the great one in my student days, the time when

you heard a great preacher at his best, has in most places dried up : or how the fashion of morning and evening service is becoming general, a fashion which has much to recommend it ; I am thinking of the actual character of the worship which one finds everywhere, even in country churches ; and of the architecture and arrangements of the churches themselves. The restoration of St. Giles', and the erection of such stately and beautiful churches as those of Galashiels, of Govan, and of the Barony at Glasgow, are signs of a greatly-changed way of feeling. These churches were costly, indeed : but not more so than certain built fifty years since, which are a bitter grief to any man with even a rudimentary knowledge of ecclesiastical art. Even Glasgow Cathedral, a structure which may be called magnificent, was arranged forty years since in a fashion which would not be tolerated now. And it is a historical fact, which you may regret or you may approve, that the worship has changed in quite as marked a measure as the buildings. It has not changed essentially, indeed : still praise, and prayer, the reading of God's Word, and the communication of Christian counsel and experience in preaching : chiefest of all, the solemn sacrament of Christ's

Body and Blood, the centre and crown of all our worship ; and the solemn admission of our children in holy Baptism to the Church of Christ, which by a most lamentable and irreverent use has in too many places been taken away from the house of God. But though the worship is vitally the same, and must needs abide the same till Christ comes back, the surroundings and details have greatly changed from what we knew as children. Let it be said here, for it is certain fact, that the Church of Scotland does not by any means stand alone in this matter. The other National Establishment of Britain is in precisely the same position. The severest rubrics cannot prevent alteration, any more than traditional usage can. Very many Anglican churches now, fabric and service, are not recognisable as the Anglican church of fifty years ago. Our changes, compared with those of England, are 'as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine.'

It is twenty-one years since Norman Macleod, speaking from this chair, made a frank declaration of his approval, in the main, of the line the Church has taken. And in these years there has been no reflux of the tide. Just the other way. And other Communion around us, I do not say have followed

our example ; but doing what they for themselves judged right, have moved in the same direction. It would not be treating this Venerable House with candour did I not state that all I have often said elsewhere as to the worship of an Ideal National Church I firmly believe : the more firmly for advancing years. I am proud to have a wide acquaintance with the younger ministers of the Church : I know what are the views which (with rare exceptions) they hold. I have seen many of the wisest and best of our ministers and elders gradually moving in a direction which I should be sorry indeed to think the Down Grade. More still : I have seen good and wise men who at the first looked unfavourably upon these changes, and who do not desire them even yet, come to acknowledge that the Church has no more loyal and devoted sons than many who have desired (in a right and good sense) to catholicise her worship to a humble degree. And now, speaking in deep seriousness, and with a most earnest desire not to aggrieve one among my honoured fathers and brethren, I desire to set forth some thoughts only for your consideration : though speaking for very many besides myself ; many who have grown old in the Church's service.

Most of us were well-content with the old ways of the Church ; and desired no change. It was a strange thing to me, and startling, when I first heard it said, five-and-thirty years since, by Dr. John Robertson of Glasgow Cathedral, and Dr. Crawford, who became Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh, that changes in our worship must come : were demanded by the growing generation. Singularly, the thing they argued for was not anything which has come. It was that the Church should provide for Her ministers and congregations such aids in public prayer as have long been unknown here. I will put their view in Dr. Macleod's words from this Chair : 'Common prayer, like common praise, in words known to all the worshippers, would, I humbly think, prove a great measure of good for the people, and more especially for the better-educated portion of the congregation.' But they added, strongly (I take Macleod's words again), 'Yet never would I restrict any pastor from enjoying the glorious privilege of prayer from his own heart, and along with his people.' I will confess that, as a youth, I thought there was no need for any liturgical help at all. The prayers one heard seemed always extremely good : and the sermon was the great thing in one's

mind. And I had been educated where one had grown very weary of a liturgy ; and had come to enjoy the freshness of prayers made on the instant for the instant. Dr. Robertson was early taken, and Dr. Crawford was not a man to press for change : while in preparing the volume of *Aids to Devotion* he found sufficient scope.

The feeling was in the air, as is the way when any great change is impending. Many men, quite apart and independently, came to think in the same way at the same time : and the voice came from the most unlikely quarters. Now that one looks back on the common worship of the Church twenty-five years ago, one is constrained to confess that the changes which have come are considerable. A good old Kyle Elder of my boyhood would be somewhat bewildered, were he to go to what on these Sundays has been the Church of the General Assembly : the Cathedral Church of St. Giles. The very name would be strange. I remember vividly, even at the time when I first preached before the Commissioner, how the venerable Principal Macfarlan gently rebuked the title I gave his Church. 'Not Glasgow Cathedral,' he said : 'The High Church of Glasgow.' I presume to bind no man's conscience, nor understanding, when I say I venture to think the changes

which have come are mainly for the better. The worship, and the churches, have grown more solemn and more beautiful : and surely our devotion is not less spiritual and real. And what has been done, even to minute details, is not properly to be called Innovation. It is Restoration of the better ways of the Church of the Reformation. And it comes of a most earnest desire to render to our Saviour our very best : in architecture, in music, in common prayer. It comes, too, of the deep conviction that everything right and touching and helpful in God's worship since the Holy Spirit came, is ours to this day.

It is ancient history now : but it is well within the memory of very many of you. It was natural that good men, deeply attached to the dear old ways, should seek to keep what they had known all their lives. It was not unnatural that such should fancy that what they had known so long had always been the way of the Church : while in fact it was no more (in some cases) than a graceless innovation against which our fathers had striven and protested : something not of Scottish origin or character at all. We all knew and revered men who would most vehemently have opposed the first entrance of that which, having been submitted to

for what is a short time in the history of a National Church, they fancied was the good old way ; and would then have laid down their life for.

It was whispered at first, in gatherings of the younger clergy, that there were *Spots on the Sun*. A pamphlet came out, bearing just that title : It seemed like touching the ark. Little things, as they seem now, were first aimed at : to kneel at prayer, to stand at praise, to have the heartening of the sacred Organ. When Principal Tulloch returned from America, he said much of the strong desire there, among Christian people who had copied the organisation of the Church of Scotland, that the congregation should rouse itself to take active part in public worship ; should not be prayed for and preached to : should at least say Amen, as St. Paul expected, as the Psalmist bids *all the people* do : should audibly join in the Lord's Prayer and in the Creed. It was a step onwards to say, Why should not Prayers be read : as Chalmers read them when he was Moderator this time fifty-eight years : as John Knox did habitually ? Not that the Prayers were bad. They were wonderfully good : If all ministers were always what some ministers are sometimes, they might be the best of all. But surely in a Church which will have no mortal man

come as intermediary between the soul and the Saviour, it is an extraordinary act of confidence in an individual man, that a congregation should gather to lift up their hearts to God Almighty and then be content to accept whatever may be said by one of whom they know little, know nothing, as the expression of their deepest feelings and most vital needs. I must not go into details: they are endless. Only let it be said how it brightens the interest of the congregation, when the same voice does not go on too long: how pleasant it is when the lessons of Scripture are read by an educated layman: as our best Elders in and out of this Assembly read them; or are read by bright young aspirants to the ministry, who get help in giving it. I do not forget what Mr. Moody said to me: and few know better: 'Change the voice continually: Never the same voice for more than five minutes, save in the sermon.' A bright, hearty service, with interest alive and alert from first to last, is surely what we aim at. And when the sermon ends with the solemn ascription, according to the good old fashion of the Kirk for its first century, how touching and heart-warming when the great congregation arises in solemn assent, and adds its thunderous Amen!

The character and arrangement of the fabrics are much changed. Where great cost is impossible, one often finds a simple beauty, pleasing and helpful. Lath and plaster are being banished. In many churches you find chairs : capable of being easily placed as may suit weddings and baptisms : and which make it natural in good faith to *kneel* at prayer. Though the Communion, as yet, does not come frequently, as the founders of the Kirk intended, the Holy Table is there to remind us of it. It is not now carried in and carried out again. The Font, too, of suitable dignity, is part of the furniture of most churches. In some, the pulpit is used only for preaching from. It is hard to quite be rid of 'the most eloquent prayer ever addressed to a Boston audience,' till the prayers are said by one kneeling among the congregation, so placed as plainly not speaking *to* them, but *for* them. It is a sad sight, a congregation *listening* intently to the prayer of an unfamiliar preacher, and perhaps gazing at him. And let us honestly kneel, if it may be. The minister always can. Nor does the attitude in the least affect his voice. Standing is good. Think of the pictures in the Catacombs. Kneeling is good : St. Paul identified the attitude with the vital thing : 'For this cause I

bow my knees.' But sitting, leaning back in a pew, gazing open-eyed at the minister, is the most abhorrent attitude in prayer ever devised by man. Anywhere, even now, we may close our eyes, we may cover our face, we may bend the knee.

No one has proposed to belittle the sermon. That is not likely to come here. For it is just among the most outstanding preachers of the Church that the desire is strong to make much of prayer and praise. And as some of them, if they are not preachers, are nothing at all, it is improbable that they will depreciate their own work. It may be said, that the sermons of these days tend to be shorter and brighter than of old : to touch a large range of subjects : to come close to actual life. And, tried by literary and critical tests, one may say that the present preaching of the Church has attained a very high level of helpfulness and excellence. Likewise of cultivated intelligence. I do not think that any educated preacher, addressing an educated congregation, and making use of their sympathy, would now make an end of Sir Walter by calling him, contemptuously, 'a writer of idle tales' : and of Burns, 'a writer of as idle songs.' Nor would any saintly minister

declare, *ex cathedrâ*, that 'no man who knew the truth as in Jesus could read Shaksperc.'

Finally, there has appeared, in many quarters, a strong craving that the great events in Christ's life, and the great Christian doctrines by which we live, should be brought back to us by the revolution of the year. We all know that here is a going-back to the ways of John Knox's earliest Book of Order. I do not venture to say more of this : save that though the Hymnal was not prepared with any view to the revival of the Christian year, it contains grand material for the commemoration of our Saviour's Birth, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Second Coming : likewise of the Descent and continual abiding of the Blessed and Holy Spirit. Many will be disposed to use these hymns at the times when most Christians do the same.

Looking back upon all the movement, one may say, generally, that it has meant the making much of Prayer and Praise, while not making less of the Sermon. And after all, the church is the place of Prayer and Praise. 'I will make them joyful in My house of prayer.' 'Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house : they will be still praising Thee.'

When we were boys, it would have seemed strange that a minister should take great interest

about the music in his church. I have heard it said, five-and-thirty years since, of a great preacher, as something eccentric, 'He wanted to arrange the tunes before service with the Precentor.' There was little Praise then : and it was cut down, unsparingly, that the sermon might be longer. It was a saintly man who said, significantly, as the bells ceased, to a young friend who was to preach for him, 'We don't read much of the Bible here.' Surely things are better than that.

In January, 1865, a Society was founded, of Ministers and Elders of the Church of Scotland, whose object was the study of the best models of Christian prayer, with the view of publishing material which might be helpful to our young preachers, and our old. In fact, the Church already had what may be called a Traditional Liturgy. A youth, entering on his duty, remembered what he had heard all his life : and in that unwritten store there are very touching and beautiful sentences : some, too, which cannot be approved. There never was the smallest mystery about that Society's work. Its meetings were public : anyone might go to them. It published a Volume, which anyone may buy. Principal Tulloch was its President till he died : he was succeeded by a very

outstanding Scotsman, strongly-Presbyterian,—the Duke of Argyll. Principal Caird and Professor Story are its Vice-Presidents still. Professor Milligan and other recent Moderators are active and valued workers. It now numbers 600 members, most of them Ministers and the rest Elders. Whoever likes may have a printed list of their names. I think the time has come in which the existence of the Church Service Society ought at least to be named here ; and I will say from this Chair, the Church has no abler ministers, nor more loyal defenders, nor more devout sons.

A desire arose, many years since, for further material for Praise. I was not among those who felt it: I was content with the Psalms and Paraphrases. But, with others, I thought that if the Church had a Hymnal, it ought to be a good one: which could face literary criticism, as well as supply a want. There was great labour, great anxiety. But the *Scottish Hymnal* is widely known: and it bears the *imprimatur* of the Supreme Court of the Church. The Assembly's approval was very seriously given: after it had fully heard nearly everything that could be said against the volume. Not everything: I could have suggested more damaging criticism than any

I have heard or read. Yet the book has commended itself to the most competent judges, and it has attained a phenomenal success. Other Committees draw from the Church: the Hymn Committee, though the editions are marvellously cheap, has given the Church its thousands.

I turn to a subject which is to many of us inexpressibly painful; and concerning which the wisest can hardly in these days suggest any practical remedy, going to the root of the evil. A word of the 'unhappy divisions' of Christian people in this country. Scotland is divided, sorrowfully divided, on points so minute that only a Scotch intellect can discern and understand them: on points which are not understood by thousands of those whom they divide. There is the perfervid genius which prompts to fight out a question to the last; and to part off wholly if there be not absolute agreement.

There are those who shrink, more than words can say, from all controversy: knowing what it results in, what tempers it brings out: while regarding with respectful wonder those who feel a vocation to serve, in that field, the Church and the Race. There are those who cannot read the

past heroic history of the Church, but with an incapacity to fully sympathise with either Resolutor or Protester. The curse of quarrelsomeness came upon the nation, and is not yet worn out. Kindly Scots have fought, as for life, for such small matters: thinking they concerned the Ark of God. The manifest result is, that over large tracts the country is greatly overchurched. One could point to parishes in which, if every man, woman, and child of the population were in a place of worship at the same moment, hundreds of sittings would remain unoccupied. There are many parishes in which three and four ministers are doing the work which it is little to say would be done as well by one: it would be done far better. 'The cause is to be represented.' And, though I will acknowledge that, generally, good sense and good feeling mitigate evils which seem due, yet in some cases there is a rivalry which does no good; and even what may be called *touting* for a congregation by very degrading arts. Discipline is made impossible. And certain folk think that in attending church they are (so to speak) patronizing the minister's place of business. Undue multiplication of churches belonging to one Communion tends to just the same evils.

All this is surely bad : bad even here. But it is awful, in the presence of the cultivated Heathen, as in India. What is the educated Hindoo to think, when he finds the High Anglican unchurching the Presbyterian, the Free Church standing apart from the Church of Scotland, the Baptist pressing his special doctrine, and the Roman Catholic unchurching them all? You know it was like to break Macleod's heart, to see Christians parted as he saw them there.

How shall we look at this? Perhaps, though our Saviour said so much of His people being One, it was not in His mind that there should be entire uniformity. May not the Church of Christ, vitally One, yet manifest herself in each nation in a government and worship suited to the genius of that nation? I suppose there is no Church on earth, which in details is exactly such as the Church of Apostolic days. Some of us are quite reconciled to the belief that Presbytery is the right thing in Scotland, and Episcopacy the right thing in England. People who talk of 'the establishment of two different religions' do not know what a religion means.

Certainly one's heart sinks, calculating the possibility of absolute agreement. To hear the utter

contrariety of opinion, the vehement maintenance of the most individual crotchets and fancies, of a nation coming to be universally educated: and then to imagine this multitude coming all to think alike: all to unite cordially in one Communion! It would be different, if we had God's Revelation for it: if any system of Church Government were what Dr. Liddon regards his own, a vital part of Christianity. But if that were so, surely the New Testament would have told us so. And it has *Not*. Those who hold that belief must go somewhere else than to God's Word for it. And they must not, as lawyers say, *approve and reprobate*. They will find there what will carry them a good deal farther. It must be reasonable Protestantism: or Rome.

I note, most thankfully, that earnest men in Scotland are now talking of Union as for very long it was not talked of here. I note, indeed, that more is said of the practical inconveniences of competing sects, than of the sinfulness of causeless separation. There are subjects, we know, on which people by their make and training must differ: unless Christ Himself would tell us what the government and worship of His Church are to be. Apart from such supernatural direction, the notion of the millions of even Protestant Christendom, of

even the Scottish Race, accepting a whole complicated system, where at every step difference is certain if people think at all, is hopeless beyond human speech.

One sometimes thinks that the prospect of all Christians becoming either Episcopalian or Presbyterian, is just as hopeful as the prospect of all British subjects becoming either Whig or Tory. Natures are different ; and will be to the end.

For a time, it appears that the testing question which is to put Scotsmen to Right and Left, will be that of a National Profession of Christianity and a National Church ; or not. No amalgamation is possible here : no splitting of the difference : if the question be one of Principle. And we hold it as one of Principle. We cannot yield. *Here we stand* : as Luther said : *we cannot do otherwise. God help us.* Here is an issue, where the answer must be Yes or No.

But there is in Scotland a Communion, at one with us in holding the Establishment Principle, from which, notwithstanding the kindest social relations and even religious sympathies, we stand apart. We witness in this country the strange phenomenon of a Communion numbering little more than one-seventy-fifth part of the population,

which yet has in some places a clear majority of the highly-educated : a majority which the education of the wealthier order in these days is likelier to increase than to diminish. I say nothing, here, of the causes which have led to this result. If improvement in our public services had been as free to such as desired it thirty years ago as it is to-day, this might not have been. And no patriot but must lament the separation of rich and poor in their worship. The severance between rich and poor is too great already : to the great loss and peril of the rich. No patriot but would be thankful for what might righteously draw together. I know well, indeed, that there are many good Christian folk who are quite content with the present outward separations : or who, though not content, conclude that these must just be borne, like other evils in our own lot or in God's Creation and Providence. Others there are who would do much for outward and visible union with any body of their fellow-Christians : notably with one holding so much in common with us, and holding so special a place. We cannot forget the root, in Scottish history, of that Church : though doubtless there is very much, too, better put away and forgotten in these days on both sides. I

minister in an ancient Church which was Pro-Cathedral of the Primacy, while that Communion was by law (or without law) established : some of the plate we use in our holy sacraments at St. Andrews bears to have been given by *James, Archbishop of the same* : not, indeed, an estimable Archbishop by any means. But though we would do much, there is a limit. If all on the other side were like that venerable and kindly scholar who for thirty years has pressed for Union, beseeching England and Scotland to be of one mind in the Lord : it would be well. But we hold no terms with such as speak of our holy sacrament of Baptism as being ‘merely sprinkled in the schism’ ; or who inform us, very sad if true, that their little body is ‘the only Church in Scotland.’ Perhaps it is not entirely amiable : but whenever I come to know of such false and insolent nonsense having been put about, I hasten to make inquiry as to the education of the speaker : likewise as to his ancestry. In many cases, there is a strange irony : though we do not now expect a man to think as his father did. And I will frankly say that my feeling is even so as to good men who propose to treat with us as from a position of superiority, in which it is assumed that

they are right and we are wrong. I have known union with England benignantly proposed on the condition that, union being brought about, we who were ordained by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery should, till we died out, abide as second-chop clerics, incapable I say not of holding an Anglican benefice, but even of ministering in an Anglican Church : all this without the smallest sense that the proposal was a most offensive one. With the authors of such schemes we will not talk for one minute. Our commission, our orders, are just as good as those of the Archbishop of Canterbury. If we did not believe that, firmly, we should not be here. But it appears really impossible to make many good men take in that Scotland is just as content with Presbytery as England is with Episcopacy. There is a high-bred provincialism through which you cannot, in many cases, get that taken in. A dignified Anglican ecclesiastic has come to Scotland, and gone about smiling at our ways : forgetting that it is precisely as provincial, as narrow, as vulgar in him to do so, as it would be for one of us to go about doing the like in England : which, God be thanked, we have more sense and better breeding than to do. Not for one moment would I confer, as to

Union, with any man, save on the basis of absolute equality. The Church of Scotland is precisely as right a branch of the Church Catholic, as is the Church of England. In the presence of the ancient unreformed Church, they stand or fall together.

Dies venit, dies Tua : the day of outward Union ; if that be God's will. But, as was said by the wise Archbishop Tait of Canterbury, thinking only of the two National Churches, 'The practical difficulties are so great, that we can but wait God's time.' I suppose the Anglican Church has rarely had a stronger Primate than that son of an Elder of the Kirk : that wise and good Archbishop whose brothers sat while they lived in this venerable house : active and admirable members of it. Meanwhile, thank God, where the Blessed Spirit is, we recognise the Church of Christ. And let there be none of that social drawing-apart which has done more than almost anything to embitter our differences.

I have taken part in meetings with ministers of other Scottish communions, with great profit and warmth of heart. But I will say, strongly, that where the good men thus acting for a time together loudly emphasised the fact, calling attention to their own liberality (if that be the word), there was

a general and deep sense of insincerity and inconsistency. It was where good men never once alluded to their differences, but simply pulled together like brethren, that one felt how here (by God's mercy) there was a real unity.

Let me quote a passage from a letter I lately received from the Bishop of Minnesota, in the United States: the saintly and eloquent Bishop Whipple: the first and most outstanding in the hierarchy of the Protestant Church in America. Surely he shows us the way.

' More memorable was the meeting of some ten eminent Presbyterian divines and laymen, with Dr. Smith, the Moderator of the General Assembly; and some ten Bishops, Clergy, and laymen of our Church. By an inspiration which came from above, our Primus and the Moderator both proposed that there should be no allusion to or discussion of topics on which we differed, but that the evening should be devoted to brotherly intercourse as between kinsmen in Christ; and then we should have prayer and a benediction. Dr. Smith first prayed, and I followed, all joining in the Lord's Prayer, and then Bishop Williams gave us his blessing. All hearts ran together; and I am sure some day this meeting will be historical. It was pre-eminently wise not to

discuss, not to argue over vexed questions. The gift of unity will not be grasped by any rash human hands. It will come down from above in the in-dwelling of the Holy One; and will come, as all other blessings, when the Church is ready to receive it.'

One word, only one, of what would NOT conduce to Union in Scotland. It is the attempt at Disestablishment. The wildest delusion ever cherished by man, is, that Disestablishment would unite Scottish Presbytery. I know no human being with whom I am less likely to unite, than with the man who thinks to compass the downfall of this National Establishment of the Church of our fathers. Some of you have seen how that question touches the people's heart: you will not forget it. This matter is vital: and we will fight for it, if need be, to the end. Never was such fiery bitterness brought into the national life in these two centuries, as would follow a politician's hand laid in enmity upon the Church. Take the Nation's voice: we are content to stand or fall by it. But take it honestly. And *that*, I say to the enemies of the Church, *that is what you dare not do!*

But we must not part with words of uncongenial controversy: thus entering on this beautiful

and hopeful June. There is better than *that*: though the most pacific of us, sons of the Church and of the Manse, if we must fight, WILL. But the blossoming hawthorn is waiting for us elsewhere: and the green trees will be thicker when we go back: the turf will be lighted up with widely-opened daisies; and the beautiful long twilights will come (as when we were boys), suffering scarce a night at all. God's blessing attend you every one, my dear brothers: and should you look back on this General Assembly, spare just a thought for one whom only your call would have brought to this chair; and who, while he lives, will never forget your more than brotherly kindness.

AND NOW, RIGHT REVEREND AND RIGHT HONOURABLE, AS WE MET IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE ALONE HEAD AND KING OF THIS CHURCH, SO IN THE SAME GREAT NAME I NOW DISSOLVE THIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY: AND APPOINT THE NEXT GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THIS CHURCH TO CONVENE IN EDINBURGH ON THURSDAY THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF MAY, 1891.

XVI

WHAT WE LIVE FOR

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*WHAT WE LIVE FOR*¹

‘ Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.’—CANT. iv. 6.

YOU need not look at the verse in which my text stands. You need not read the chapter till you please. I do not ask you even to think of the strange Song, so charming to some saintly souls ; so distinctly repellent to others, who think that by allegorising as its deep-sighted interpreters do, you may in fact make any scripture mean anything. But there is wonderful music, no doubt, in many of these verses ; and it is not for us lowly Christians to differ, unless very humbly, from such as Samuel Rutherford. Of the cloud of great preachers who have ministered in this historic church through the centuries it has seen, and whose memory makes it, even in its frightful architectural degradation, one

¹ Preached at the Parish Church, St. Andrews, on Sunday, August 25, 1895.

of the most pathetic fabrics in Christendom to such as have heart or head, few indeed, in ancient or modern times, have been saintlier, have been more lifted-up above these things seen, have been more inspired with the love and spirit of the Blessed Redeemer Himself, than the little fair man who so touched weary souls in this place on Sundays and weekdays forgotten ; and who was laid to his rest in our magnificent churchyard just two hundred and thirty-four years ago. Laid to rest, that is, what of him was mortal. The spirit, made perfect, abides where 'glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.'¹

Now for my text. There is a sense which has been put upon these words : I will not say forced upon them : which they may quite well bear, though I must confess at once it was far from the mind of that nameless woman who is set out as first saying them. They are musical in themselves : of course the tuneless revisers, who could not recognise the grand perfection of solemn English, have done their worst to spoil them. It is here as with other great passages of holy scripture. We read them by Gospel light : and no carping scholarship can take that kindly gleam away. Whatever may have been in the mind of him, whoever and wherever and

¹ The reputed last words of Samuel Rutherford.

whenever, who wrote the words which have been translated into my text ; we know perfectly what *we* mean by them : when we say, with thirsting hearts and with moistened eyes, that our prayer and hope and purpose are, to wait, holding fast by our Saviour, touched and sustained by the Blessed and Holy Spirit, through all present loneliness and desolation, 'until the day break, and the shadows flee away.'

Do you suppose that these words would have been graven with an iron pen (as Job said) on the Cross of stone above many a Christian grave ; and read, even by such as never knew the sleeper beneath the green grass, through a mist of tears : if they meant no more than severe criticism would tell us ? The modest bride interrupting the too-poetic flow of the bridegroom's eloquence : with words which in sober earnest mean just this : 'Really this is quite too complimentary : I must get away for a little while till you calm down to homely sense' ?—I trow not. That is not what we mean at all. Not that : nor anything within a thousand miles of that. We go straight to that whereof the Apostles continually preached : that which in those days was held as distinctive and essential Christianity. We go straight and with the full heart to 'Jesus and the Resurrection.'

We put everything else aside : we cast our anchor here.

It is very shadowy now : very dark and doubtful. 'We know in part.' We know little. Of some of the things we most desire to know, we know nothing clearly ; and the longer we think, the less. Something sealed the lips and stayed the pen of Apostle and Evangelist. The words we most long to find in the New Testament are not there !

If there were a chapter which told us where and what-like those are who have gone before us,—not martyrs and apostles half so much as those whom we knew so well when they were here, those who were dearest to ourselves,—how that chapter would be read and re-read ! But that chapter is not within the boards of God's revelation to us. Plenty of words have been said and written which are of no authority whatsoever, as to details manifold. But word weighted with God's authority,—none at all.

We carry our dead to the last resting-place. We lay down low and dark in the earth that which was mortal in them, which we used to know : the soul has flitted away, in a fashion which, but for Christ and what He taught us, we should call

Going Out: we try to sing, sometimes, as we were bidden, 'Now the labourer's task is o'er': and we turn away from the little narrow opening in the green turf under the grey cathedral. A mere slit in the blazing verdure of South England, the sister of my best friend in this world told me his grave seemed to be. And the thousands that stood round it, though among them were the greatest dignitaries of the greatest of National Churches, could make the lowly resting-place nothing more. But be it wheresoever, what remains to us all is that we turn away from the long home, the house appointed for all living, and try (as we were counselled) to take again to our work, 'until the day break, and the shadows flee away.'

So we say, vaguely looking onward to a time of re-union. Long ago, it was *That Day*: St. Paul himself could say no more. No doubt, the day when Christ shall come back: and bring them that sleep in Jesus with Him. Meanwhile, everything waits for that. 'The earnest expectation of the creature,' the dumb unconscious longing of all creation, 'waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God': that is, the coming back, visible and glorious, of those who went away.

The brightest summer day here is no better

than darkness, if we think by its light to read the things which perhaps the angels desire to look into, or to see behind the Veil. No sun that ever shone on sea or land can reveal to us the secret things which belong to God : the reason of God's strange dealings with His children : why the precious useful life is cut short, and the life which is the curse of all who have to do with it is lengthened out : why the vilest of men are exalted, as the Psalmist said, and the best have a sore struggle : why it sounds like a wild story from some strange world (as a great thinker said), 'when any man obtains that which he merits,—or any merits that which he obtains' : above all (for we always come back to that), where and what-like is the Home to which those went who went away from you, leaving all here blank and desolate. The things which we know not now we shall know hereafter : we have Christ's own promise for it. But only when these voices are hushed : when these shadows flee away.

All will be plain and clear then : when you hear the voice and clasp the hand once more. For we know, on authority which cannot be doubted, that this is what all creation groans and travails to see. This is the Restoration of all things. We ask for this every time we say, 'Thy Kingdom

come: Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.'

'When the day breaks, and the shadows flee away,' means nothing less than the time when we shall get everything: when the reign of good shall begin and all evil shall perish: when 'death and hell,' as the Book of Revelation promises, shall be cast to destruction for evermore. Christ, Who lived and died for us, is to 'see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.' Does any soul worth counting think he can be satisfied yet? In this world of unutterable sin and misery, this world whose awful story often sickens you as you read the daily record of the time, the kind of world He lived and died to see? Was it to keep going on this scene of Turkish horrors and abominations, of African slavery and of smug wealthy Britons who stood up for it while they durst, ay, of English murders and hangings, that Christ agonised in Gethsemane and died on Calvary? Do you really think He can be 'satisfied' with things as they are? Nay, verily: nor will He be so until that inconceivable time when 'there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying: neither shall there be any more pain.'

For He 'was manifested that He might destroy

the works of the Devil': that is, make an end of all evil: which means all sin and all sorrow. And He has done little towards that yet. So far, evil commonly has the upper hand. I suppose it was only a certain insensibility and want of heart which prompted the famous sentence,—and he was both a great man and a good man (of a somewhat unspiritual type indeed) who wrote it,—that 'It is a happy world after all.' It is Not. Ay, there have been decades of the world's history, and regions of this world's face, wherein, to say the truth, if the world had been governed by the Devil, and not by God, I am bold to say it would have made little apparent difference. Things have been just about as bad as they could be. Our great Scottish genius saw far deeper than Paley's heartless judgment, when he wrote that 'man was made to mourn.' The earliest written book on earth had been before him, with the unforgettable 'Born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.' The Son of Consolation could but give forth the line of comfortless sound, 'We must through much tribulation.' And one, not second to any Apostle, St. Paul himself, though to him 'to live was Christ,' hesitated not to testify that 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miser-

able.' It needs another and a better world to set this right. But for the hope which thirsting souls have thought they saw gleaming through my text, we go back over ages to the sublime chorus in the *Ædipus* ; ' Not to be, is best of all ! '

There is no fancy about it : and it does not belong only to saint-like souls who have an assurance which is vouchsafed to few. Hold to your Saviour, that you be not disappointed at the last : Open the door to Him every day anew : Cling to His Cross. But of a truth we live through this present life through the hope that the day will break when there shall be no more night : that the spireless and domeless Golden City will arise in our view, where there will be no temple because all the hallowed place will be one great temple, magnificent as none ever was here : that those will be given back for ever who went before us for a little while. And walking, too, by that surgy murmur which some could barely do without, we recall, oftentimes, the glorious truth hidden and embodied in the assurance which is true in a sense far deeper than the literal, that he who saw the Apocalypse, beholding the new heaven and the new earth and the new Jerusalem, saw that ' there was no more sea.'

I have told you what that means. It is a sublime assurance. Yet only part, a little part, of what my text has wonderfully pictured to countless Christian souls. That morning, the like of which has never dawned yet, when we 'shall be satisfied, when we awake,' with the vision of the Blessed Redeemer, knowing 'Him, and the power of His Resurrection,' as never before: when we shall receive, in Him, every right thing we ever desired: yea, 'With Him, All Things!'

There is an onward bent in our nature: It is vital to us. It has got to be, in a solemn sense, 'Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.' That does not mean but that the dearest of all voices speak to us from the Past; and that we look for no days, like the days departed, on this side of Time. But it means that you cannot live in the Past, or on the Past. It is gone; and it cannot sustain you now. And it matters not how long it was: not though it count up to years, once inconceivable: inconceivable in any relation to yourself. To say Thirty Years: Forty Years: it is just a name: a vanishing dream: it is nothing now. When the years come to an end, it is as though they had never been at all. If you are to

live on, as Christ intends you, you must look forward. You worked your best, in your vocation, for forty years : but now you have retired from it, you must find something to do yet. You cannot live, by looking back on those laborious years. I had a dear friend who went not many months since : all educated people know the name of Froude. He was seventy-six ; but he often said he hoped he might not live after he had ceased to be able to work. There must still be something to look on to. And far more touching remembrances come, than of the very hardest and most faithful toil : remembrances so sacred that they are not to be spoken of ; and far too deep for easy-coming tears. Only let it be said, that here too you must look onward. Which does not mean but that you continually look back. Yet if you are to live at all, you must be reaching forth unto those things which are before. You will never, for practical wisdom, get ahead of him who could likewise soar so transcendently into the high empyrean, the one name which is in each of the three glorified companies of the *Te Deum* : St. Paul, Apostle, Prophet, and Martyr. But you are not to feed your soul on ashes by looking forward and reaching forth to anything,

how excellent soever, which will fail, and pass, like what has been. No: you will look on, the Blessed Spirit enabling you, to that which will satisfy fully, to that which will last for ever: to the season when the day shall break, and the shadows flee away.

The grass blazes bright-green in these sunshiny blinks after rain, as when Christ walked on it and made the people sit down on it: I do not believe it could have been more beautiful when Eden was here. The inconceivably old Sun sends forth his ancient song, and smiles on a sinful and sorrowful world gloriously as on the First Day. Nature, were but sin away and Christ back again with all He is to bring with Him, is good enough for Paradise: We know what is the only thing that is a jarring exception. But till sin goes and He comes back, bringing His harvest of blest souls with Him, it is a dark world: where we can but watch the distant dawning of the better Light on the hill-tops or from the deep sea; and wait, patiently, as the Holy Ghost may help us, 'until the day break, and the shadows flee away.'

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